

IN STEVENSON'S SAMOA



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IN STEVENSON'S SAMOA

BY

MARIE FRASER

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P R E F A C E



I HAVE been asked to write a preface to this little book. This would seem a work of supererogation unless it were to point out that it is as it were a chance record, and therefore in some respects the more valuable, of the character of Robert Louis Stevenson. Slight as is the sketch of him, a more attractive portrait of a man of genius, whose end and aim was to promote the happiness of his fellow-creatures, has in my poor judgment seldom been presented to us.

In the frontispiece I recognise at once the commanding figure of my old friend standing by his horse. The last words I had from him reached me

on the same day that the news of his death was known in London. Standing by the house are his wife and Mrs. Fraser. On the other side, on horseback, is Miss Fraser, for whom I am glad to act as literary godfather.

JAMES PAYN.

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CHAPTER I

FIRST DAYS IN SAMOA

‘You have taken your amber necklace? That’s right. You will find it most useful. Flowers also are greatly worn.’ So said a friend who had visited Samoa, as he bade us adieu on our departure from Sydney for those islands. Our spirits were further cheered by his brother saying, ‘I hear any white people who are there live in the most simple manner. All eat out of one large bowl in the middle of the floor, and fight over bones in corners, gnashing their teeth and growling. Then, in a frenzy of hospitality, they rush out into the jungle,

tear up roots with their teeth, and, bringing them in, lay them in front of you ! ’

So right in the teeth of a N.E. gale we started—my friend and I, the only women on board a little German ship, and, passing out between the Heads of Sydney Harbour, we plunged into the great Pacific Ocean. The hopes of our skipper that the gale we encountered was local, and that when fifty miles beyond the Australian coast we should sail out of it, were not realised, for as we proceeded on our voyage the storm increased, and the height of its fury was reached after we had passed Lord Howe and Norfolk islands. For three days and nights the tempest raged, and it would require a Clark Russell to describe the terrible hurricane that our little ship braved and weathered triumphantly. A marvellous feeling of luxury and peace pervaded our small world when, after about eight days, the winds and waters subsided and, the unholy noises—quite the worst part of a storm at sea—being silenced, our skipper beamingly announced he was going to have a bath. Poor man ! he had

not taken his clothes off during those three awful nights.

After several weeks of delightful cruising in the Pacific, visiting beautiful tropic islands, one morning the sun rose like a ball of fire, flooding the world with a golden lustre, and out of the ocean, regal in its colouring of purple and gold in the early light, we saw far away in the distance the rugged outline of the Samoan, or Navigator Islands, a complete contrast to the last group we had visited—the Friendly Islands, with their smooth turf roads, so good for riding and driving, and innumerable atolls, showing only a few feet above the waves and fringed with a continuous line of cocoa palms that turned and ruffled, tossing their feathery branches in the breeze. The Samoan Islands, Savaii, Upolu and Tutuila, rise out of the sea to an altitude of from four to five thousand feet, the great undulating slopes of the mountains densely clothed with forest, which in many places crowns the very topmost ridges and waves clear against the blue sky, while round the base innumerable coral bays gleam white in the fierce

light. By the time the sun was high in the heavens, blazing down on our white decks, where the pitch bubbled in the seams, we were skirting along the coast of Upolu ; and on the beach could be seen clusters of little brown houses, made of palm-leaves, and dark-coloured natives skimming over the water in outrigger canoes, fishing, or wading about with spears in their hands—a favourite method of catching fish, in which they are experts. Soon one or two wooden houses, belonging to the owners of coffee and cacao plantations, began to appear, and after passing the charming-looking house which is used as a Mormon mission, we could see the flag at Matautu Point run up to announce our approach. From among the trees on the mountain above Apia gleamed the white walls of the Catholic College, characteristically placed on one of the most beautiful spots imaginable, and commanding a magnificent view ; for where are there more picturesque sites than those chosen by the Fathers in days gone by for their abbeys, priories, and monasteries ?

Passing rapidly along the coast, the British

Consulate came in sight, a pretty one-storeyed house with a wide verandah running all round it, and in front a well-kept lawn, from the centre of which fluttered the British ensign. A minute later and Matautu Point, with the pilot station, is passed, and we are in the Bay of Apia, which stretches from Maliata to Mulinuu, a distance of about two miles, and along which, at intervals, a thin line of stores and shops is spread. Our ship passed through the outer coral reef of the two by which the bay is protected, and dropped anchor just where H.M.S. 'Calliope' made her bold and famous escape in 1888; and nearer the shore lay the great iron hulk of the German warship 'Adler,' which still shows half out of the water, a silent but eloquent reminiscence of that memorable occasion. It was pleasant to see swinging round her anchor close by a British cruiser with the white ensign flying. A few natives came paddling out in boats and canoes; among which we chose a boat large enough to hold our baggage, &c., bade our kindly skipper 'Leben Sie wohl,' and, running down the gangway, were soon being

pulled towards land. In the clear water we could see droves of tiny fishes with parrot-bills, and others like iridescent jewels sparkling in the sun's rays as they flashed through the submarine coral forest. While crossing the inner reef our boat grated over the great branches of coral; however, our Kanaka boatman was delightfully unconcerned, and landed us safely at the back of a house where there happened to be a little jetty. A grey-haired Englishman with a kindly face and courteous manner came down the steps to meet us, exclaiming: 'Well, I *am* glad to see English ladies! Welcome to Samoa!' and instantly called his servants to come and take our things out of the boat. This was the postmaster, who had lived there about twenty years, and he hospitably invited us to come into his house, where immediately tea, cakes and bananas were served by his housekeeper, a dignified old native woman named Solepa. Our new acquaintance was an enthusiastic Englishman, and inundated us with questions of 'Home,' which included anxious inquiries as to a prospec-

tive war in Europe, a cholera scare, and the latest tenor ballads. We satisfied his questions to the best of our ability, and when we told him we hoped to find some little house up in the hills, and remain some months on the island, he most courteously put his house and people at our service until we should be suited, saying that his cottage at the back of the house would be sufficient for himself.

Early that afternoon, starting on our researches for an abode, we first strolled along 'the beach,' as the little settlement of houses is styled in most South Sea islands; while the dwellers therein are talked of as 'beach folk,' and rather scorned by the inhabitants of the scattered villages in the mountains or the straggling settlements around the coast where strange ships do not trouble to call and the White trader is practically unknown. After walking about a quarter of a mile past a desultory row of houses and stores, meeting groups of indolent-looking natives and a few white men, most of whom lifted their hats out of courtesy to the strangers, we came to a well-made road which

turned sharply off to the right, leading straight up to the mountains. This road we followed, but slowly, for after the sea-breeze of weeks past the teeming warmth and wondrous beauty of the surroundings gave the feeling of wandering in dreamland.

The luxuriant tropical foliage on either side, and the gorgeous birds that hovered over the great trumpet-shaped flowers and twittered quaint little songs from the branches of wild orange-trees and cocoa-nutpalms, added to the enchantment. Scarlet and black honey-eaters flashed through the dark green foliage, green and yellow jaos (*Ptilotis carunculata*) chattered in their almost human voices, and blue kingfishers crossed our path at every few steps. As soon as the beach was left behind the natives we met were courteous and charming. They all greeted us with smiles and the salutation of 'Talofa!' which signifies 'My love to you!' 'Good day to you!' After about a mile and a half, and almost at the termination of the good part of the road (for farther up the hills it degenerates sadly), a turf track branched off, and, following it, we came to a small

farm and tea-garden, where sundry youths engaged in firms and stores on the beach or on plantations come to gossip and drink lager. It was kept by an old Swiss woman, who had lived many years in the Pacific islands, but who still longed for home. On hearing that we had never drank cocoa-nut juice, she ordered a black Solomon Island boy, in the quaintest mixture of English, Samoan, and German, to 'fetch nut.' He instantly rushed up a cocoa palm, cut a large green nut, and in a few seconds had knocked the top off and brought it to us. While we were enjoying this new pick-me-up, and telling our hostess what we were searching for, sighs were heard coming from the other side of the verandah; they drew nearer, and then a young Englishman, pale, haggard and woe-begone, gently moved towards us. In a melancholy voice he requested the old *fräulein* to present him to the strangers, and after the ceremony was performed he collapsed into a chair and sighed. As we were wondering if anything could be done for so sad a case, he feebly murmured, 'I hear you wish a

house ; well, I have one, and would be delighted if you would take it. I am going away ; I don't know where—just somewhere. I shall likely go to-morrow, by the ship that brought you ' (a weary sigh). ' I have a buggy ; if you would care to come, I should be happy to drive you to my plantation.'

We accepted his invitation and started at once. On the way he wearily told us that he was an Oxford University man, and spoke of many friends there, and his people in England ; also, that he did not think he would ever return to Upolu, so we could have the place, with all its beautiful grounds and his servant, for always ! Then we told this weary fragment of humanity that we only intended to stay a few months, and if he was away, what should we do with his house then ? He sighed, and said :

' Oh ! just leave it ; it is of no consequence ! But I know you will wish to stay when you see it. I have the most marvellous plantation on the island. I ' (groan) ' planted it all myself. *Everything* that one can wish for or require is there.'

At last he stopped in front of a very untidy little shanty which had a picturesque jungle of

garden in front, in which many-coloured crotons and hibiscus were plentiful. After exhibiting his small house and very scantily clad Samoan man, whom he announced was a capital cook, he shook off his despondency to some extent, and volunteered to show us over his plantation. It consisted of a few acres of jungle, and at intervals, in little clearings, were tiny shrubs of various nationalities. Here our sad friend became talkative, and began to explain the virtues of the different plants. No vegetables or fruit-trees were to be seen, save a few wild bananas in the distance ; and when his attention was drawn to this fact, he said :

‘ Oh, no ; but everything that could possibly be wanted in the way of medicine is here ; you could wish for nothing else ! ’ Then he proceeded to describe minutely the several uses of the different plants. On being asked the good of a certain insignificant looking stick with two or three leaves attached, he became positively excited, and enthusiastically exclaimed :

‘ Ah ! that is wonderful—that is absolutely necessary in the formation of certain pills ! ’

At last we recognised a small blue eucalyptus. This he joyously informed us was 'the gem of them all'; no one, he thought, had ever managed to grow a gum in those islands before. We quite won his heart by agreeing with him concerning the virtues of this Australian tree, but coming to the conclusion that we felt very strong, and more in want of eatables than drugs, thanked him for his kindness, and said we should like to see some other places before deciding. In this he quite agreed, and told his man he might expect us any day, and to look after the plantation. He retired into an inner room, whence he emerged with a small portmanteau and very smart dressing-bag, which he deposited in the buggy; then, with one last look at his eucalyptus, and presenting a little live kingfisher to us, which had a string attached to one foot to prevent it from flying away, he scrambled into the cart, and drove us down to Apia. He said he would stay at the hotel all night, and be ready to sail in the morning. So we wished this sad youth a pleasant voyage, at which he moaned painfully. He sailed the follow-

ing day, and nothing more was heard of him. The next day we found a charming little place on the slope of the mountains: a wooden house containing two large rooms, a small harness-room, and a wide verandah running round three sides. It was built on a grassy hill surrounded by several acres of magnificent fruit-trees, and away beyond stretched the great primeval forest. To the front, beyond the jungle of feathery palms, sparkled the blue Pacific, and the roar of the surf breaking on the coral reefs could be heard like distant artillery, while on either side, at no great distance, two mountain torrents rushed down with tropical violence to precipitate themselves into the ocean. This was an ideal place, if it could be had. It had been built by a store-keeper on 'the beach' as a country residence, but had never been inhabited. His lease of the ground did not allow him to let it, but if we *gave* him something in the shape of dollars for the use of it, he would be very pleased; and we found it a simple matter to settle this matter to the satisfaction of all concerned.

So next morning at dawn we started in a waggon laden with stores, mats, mosquito-nets, a few dishes, a pot, a fryingpan, and an American stove. The road went part of the way to our house, and then a very good turf track took one right to the gate. There was a little native house close by, where our man, Mafulu, lived with his wife. He was a fine creature, and suggested so strongly the first man that we often called him 'Adam,' at which he was well pleased. He was very sharp, and picked up some English words quickly ; and we soon learned the Samoan names for things from him and our native visitors.

As soon as we arrived at our door, Cipau—or, as Mafulu explained, his 'woman'—glided out from a grove of bananas and citrons, and after a cheery 'Talofa' squatted on the verandah and meditatively contemplated us through the puffs of a cigarette of native tobacco rolled in a dried banana-leaf. A Samoan rarely or never hurries ; so Mafulu slowly and deliberately began to carry in the things, and fit up the stove in the harness-room, which was to

be cook-house as well. In our deplorable ignorance of native ways, we asked Cipau by signs and a few words we had picked up to help in a small way. She stared, while slowly putting her still lighted cigarette behind her ear, and, tentatively lifting a small tin of sardines, carried it into the house. Then, smiling blandly, to show she forgave our stupidity, and was not offended, she sat down on one of the mats we had just rolled out on the floor, and calling to Mafulu, who was busy with the stove, elaborately explained how she had been working, and told him to carry in the rest of the things. We soon learned what a blunder we had made in asking a woman to exert herself; if of her own accord she chose to do any little thing, good and well—be grateful; but never be so ill-mannered as to ask her to work.

In an hour or two the little shanty began to look habitable and tolerably comfortable. Anyway, our efforts were rewarded by Cipau's genuine admiration for the magnificence of our arrangements. At last, when everything was stowed away

and the stove fixed, it was time to think of a rather late tiffin. Mafulu, who we had been assured could cook well, proudly showed off the stove, and when a grand wood fire had burnt up, he and Cipau joyously exclaimed, 'Kel e le tongafitie !' (Great is the devilry). When the first excitement of establishing 'our own fireside' far away in the Southern Pacific had cooled down, it was suggested that Mafulu should cook something. But his sole idea was to dig a hole in the ground, which he half filled with stones ; then, making a fire on the top, he kept it burning till the stones were red-hot, when he cleared away the ashes, and, rolling a pig or a bread-fruit in banana-leaves, laid it among the hot stones, where it was covered over, and in a short time this simple repast was ready. I then hinted to Tamaitai, as the natives all called my friend, that she ought to try something on that grand fire. I had recollections of often having heard her speak with rapture of the delicious little dishes she would cook if only an opportunity occurred. But after a grave contemplation of the stove, which appeared

rather intricate to our inexperienced eyes, she cheerfully announced :

‘ Oh ! I think *you* may do the cooking.’

It can be imagined how awful this sounded to one whose efforts had never gone beyond scrambling eggs, roasting chestnuts or mushrooms on the bars of a grate, and making toffee !

Then, it was rather puzzling to know what to do first. The only things to cook in were a gigantic pot (the smallest the beach could produce) and a frying-pan. Of course, I decided to begin with the latter : it is so much easier to see how things are going on in a fryingpan, and then, when it begins to burn it can be lifted off so quickly. Great was the joy of our natives over this fresh ‘ tongafitie ’ when the contents of the fryingpan began to bubble up and boil, and great was our satisfaction over our first home-made tiffin.

In the evening, after the lamp was lit, footsteps were heard coming round the verandah, and immediately a small procession of natives appeared—men and women—and after the usual ‘ Talofa ’

all quietly sat down cross-legged on the floor. This invasion was rather a surprise, and we were puzzled to know what to do with them. Etiquette rules supreme in Samoa, and any glaring mistakes are unpardonable. Our visitors made a few well-chosen remarks, but, unfortunately, we could not quite grasp their meaning ; yet the courtesy and kindly intention were obvious. Happily, we had some illustrated papers, with which they were delighted. Some pictures, especially landscapes, they were doubtful about, but a portrait of anyone, a horse, or a ship, they understood, and, pointing to them, insisted on us repeating the native names. But what pleased them most were the advertisements—pictures of shoes, or a tea-set. They would count all the cups and saucers, the cream-jug, sugar-basin, &c., and chuckle with glee over the number. Then I played my banjo to them ; they were delighted with it, and kept time, swaying their lithe bodies from side to side, snapping their fingers, and singing.

At last, when it was about time to go to bed,

they rose, and saying a few more friendly words, wished their new neighbours good-night, and, stepping off the verandah, disappeared silently into the darkness. So ended the first day in our new home.

The following morning, when it was still barely light, we were awakened by the sounds of sundry coughs from the verandah. We paid no attention to them, and were composing ourselves for another nap, when the sounds were repeated with such violence that it appeared to be our absolute duty to hasten to the relief of the sufferers. On opening the door we found Mafulu and Cipau beaming upon us, and not a sign of coughs or colds in creation. It was merely their delicate method of announcing it was time to be up and about. So in future, whenever threatenings of bronchitis came from the verandah, we knew it was the hour for early coffee.

As soon as the sun was up Mafulu appeared in the doorway clad in a fresh banana-leaf—the brilliant green contrasting pleasantly with his

beautifully tattooed skin—and in his hand a huge knife with a blade two inches wide. From a few words he said, and catching the native names of several of the fruit-trees, we gathered that he was anxious to know what we wished brought in. Now, it is a dreadful situation to have to direct a servitor in work of which one is completely ignorant, especially when the said servitor respects one as a ‘white chief!’ He who hesitates is lost, and to show ignorance concerning bananas and mummy apples to a native would be deplorable indeed. There was nothing for it but to put a bold face on the matter and brazen it out; so I sallied forth into the plantation and looked for ripe bananas and custard apples; but nothing seemed ripe. Then I remembered that bananas on the trees are always green; so pointing out the best-looking bunches, which Mafulu slashed off the trees with one stroke of his terrible knife, I decided on avoca pears, citrons, mangoes, oranges and alligator pears. The consequence was that at the end of half an hour enough fruit was lying on the verandah to furnish

a stall in Covent Garden. The bunches of bananas were hung up to ripen, and the rest were brought into the house for immediate use.

Our honest native then prostrated himself on a leaf, and gave himself up to the consumption of many native cigarettes, having completed a severe half-day's work. The heat of the stove and the exertion of keeping things from being singed burnt up the first enthusiasm for cooking our own food; so it was agreed that Mafulu should try to get a boy to do the cooking.

That afternoon, as we returned from a stroll, a most picturesque figure, riding a slim, dun-coloured horse, came in sight. The horseman was clad in a brown velvet coat, light corduroy breeches, long boots, and a white cap. He was tall and slight, with dark brown hair, worn not very short; long, nervous fingers, and brilliant black eyes. On catching sight of the strangers he flung himself off his horse and strode impulsively towards us; a moment later and we were being shaken by the hands and welcomed right heartily to Samoa by Robert Louis Stevenson.

CHAPTER II

R. L. STEVENSON'S BIRTHDAY FÊTE

Two miles of good road lead straight inland from the beach at Apia, and are followed by a few miles of track which winds up the mountains, and in many places resembles a dry watercourse more than anything else. It widens to several yards broad ; it narrows to about two or three feet ; it does everything a road can do to be fantastic ; and when the rain falls, in a short space it is a veritable torrent. This is the road that winds up through the forest to Vailima, the home of Robert Louis Stevenson.

Vailima takes its name from *vai* (water), *lima* (five). As yet only four streams have been discovered ; however, the name is pretty enough to excuse the discrepancy in numbers. This ideal island-home in the heart of the mountain forest

has been described so often by abler pens than mine that I need say but little of it here. On emerging from the dense forest the track leads on to a plateau, and continues for a short distance between high hedges of limes laden with fruit. Soon a large wooden gate terminates the path, and visitors catch their first glimpse of Vailima. The house is so situated that it can only be seen from ship-board and when well out to sea. We pass through the gate, which is probably standing hospitably open ; or, if not, a dusky hued, merry-faced retainer, who has espied the strangers, rushes down with many leaps and bounds, and with a cordial 'Talofa' throws it open. In a few minutes the completely cleared lawn is traversed, and one is dismounting on the broad verandah which runs round two-thirds of the house. The house, with its blue walls and terra-cotta roof, is built of wood imported from America ; for though in the midst of grand forest trees, the Samoans have not as yet begun to utilise what might be to them a source of wealth, and it will in all probability be left to some

enterprising white man to start sawmills and find out the real value and utility of the superabundance so lavishly provided by Nature.

In the old section of the house there are no passages ; all the rooms open with sliding doors on to the verandah. An outside staircase leads to an upper verandah, from which a magnificent view is to be had—first across the green lawn, then over the tops of feathery branched palm-trees, tall ‘fua-fuas,’ laden with pink blossom, and dark-leaved bread-fruit trees, and away beyond a great stretch of the blue Pacific—brilliant as sapphires, and merging into turquoise where sky and ocean meet. From this verandah opens the library, a delightful place, lined with books, and piles of them lying on the floor, the chairs, and tables. Things are certainly allowed to ‘occur’ here ; any attempt at order would be but coldly received. The only other room on this floor is a large apartment hung with tapa (native cloth), and many wonderful curios and souvenirs scattered about of Mr. and Mrs. Stevenson’s wanderings in the South Seas. This,

during our visit, was used as a guest-chamber, for it was the room allotted to us when, after Christmas, we paid a long visit to Vailima. The new wing, which was completed while we were there, begins with a large hall panelled throughout with dark polished wood, and a broad staircase leads out of it to the rooms above. The plantations of cacao, taro swamps, and banana-groves, all stretch away in the clearings of the forest at the back of the house, where also, enclosed within wire-fencing and high hedges, is the kitchen-garden, planned and planted under Mrs. Stevenson's particular care and direction, and wherein, among other things, were tomatoes, and that most delicious of vegetables, the egg-fruit, which here grew to perfection.

The upper verandah, which overlooked garden, plantations, and a wide stretch of forest, was an excellent point of vantage from which to watch the innumerable wild birds that came to feed on nutmegs and other tropical fruits. As day dawned and the light crept over mountain and forest, the 'veha,' a little rail with mottled black and brown

plumage, in which the spirit of the god 'Alii Tu' was supposed to live, would emerge from the bushes and warily creep across the grass, picking up insects here and there, but on the slightest alarm would stand motionless or squat close to the ground—always near a brown leaf or a stone—and was then as invisible as our own ptarmigan under similar conditions. Then, as the sun flashed his first beams on dew-laden tree and flower, the clear, liquid note of the 'jao' (wattled honey-eater) was heard, and he and his mate might be seen busy among the blossoms of the mummy apple; and the 'fuia,' a dark-plumaged starling, which represented the spirit of a sort of god called 'Moso,' joined in with mellow voice. Among the forest trees many species of doves flitted from branch to branch, their beautiful plumage—green, pink, white, purple, and grey—showing clearly against the sombre foliage. Later, as the sun grew more powerful, the 'sengas,' exquisite little parrakeets with feathers of the gayest—green, blue, crimson, purple, and yellow—came chattering by in pairs, and might be seen clinging

to the fruit-blossoms, from which they sucked the nectar ; and overhead the tropic birds, sailing in wide circles, their snowy plumage and long red tail-feathers (the latter a distinguishing feature in the head-dress of certain Samoan chiefs) showing distinctly against the blue sky.

Mr. Stevenson and his family received their friends on the verandah, generally barefooted, always bareheaded, and clad in loose garments suitable to the climate. A number of happy, guileless-looking retainers, clad in Stuart tartan lavas, the Vailima livery, grouped themselves about, suitably filling in a picturesque background. These were the 'house boys,' all characters, and all good Samoans. There were a host of 'outdoor boys,' too, who worked on the plantations and looked after the horses and cows. They became visible from time to time, especially in the evening, when Mrs. Stevenson's son and daughter and I used to play guitar, mandoline, and banjo. This fascinated the natives, and they appeared in twos and threes out of the darkness till there was quite a crowd sitting on

the verandah keeping time to the music ; and they always took care to encourage us with the most outrageous flattery, of which they thoroughly appreciated the humour.

On the 13th of November a *fête* was held at Vailima to celebrate the birthday of the poet and novelist, and it was characteristic of the host that the gathering consisted almost entirely of natives, very few white people being present. It had been a raging storm of wind and rain all day, but towards evening the rain ceased and the wind fell ; nevertheless, it was fortunate that we had been invited to remain all night, as the road was reduced to a deplorable condition. After a hearty welcome from Mr. and Mrs. Stevenson, who were surrounded by native chiefs, their wives, &c., and a drink of kava, we were carried away to be suitably decorated for the feast. Ropes of many-coloured, sweet-smelling flowers were twisted round our necks and waists, and wreaths placed on our heads. Everyone was decked out in like manner—our host wearing his wreath of white jessamine

with grace and distinction, as if to the manner born.

When all was ready there was some debate in the household as to the correct procedure, according to native courtesy, for the guests to go into the feast, spread in a large native house which had just been completed. At last the intricacies of the Samoan etiquette were solved, and away we all trooped, Mr. Stevenson leading the way with his wife. Coming out of the darkness into the blaze of torchlight, a quaintly fantastic sight met our eyes—a native house thatched with branches of cocoa-nut palms, layers of palm-leaves on the floor, and those again covered by many finely woven, tawny-coloured mats. It was difficult to believe that the mass of colouring which lay from five to six feet wide on the ground and stretched from end to end of the house was the feast; and it was only when we had arranged ourselves cross-legged on mats, and our eyes became accustomed to the light, that we realised the gigantic quantity of food thus spread out. It was entirely a native banquet,

everything cooked and eaten 'faa Samoa' (*à la* Samoan!), and all the eatables laid on banana-leaves. There were dozens of pigs, varying in size from a rabbit to an immense creature which formed the centrepiece; quantities of chickens and ducks, every kind of native fruit and vegetable, and before each guest a leaf of large pink prawns, which are plentiful in the waters from which Vailima takes its name. Scattered about everywhere were clusters of scarlet and cream-coloured hibiscus blossom, yellow allamanda, and fragrant, sweet-scented ginger; the posts of the house even being decorated with hibiscus and frangipani with an art of which the Samoan is master.

After we had enjoyed the prawns and, in the absence of serviettes, were wondering what was to happen next, we were quite reassured by the appearance of the boys, who knelt with a basin of water and napkin beside each guest. Then the feast proceeded right merrily. Everyone talked, and the pretty, vivacious native girls laughed at the ignorance displayed by the few strangers in their

lack of knowledge concerning the subtlest method of enjoying the most rare delicacies, and they spared no pains in instructing them. It was our first acquaintance with the versatile taro. There was taro-root baked like potatoes, taro-root minced and beaten up with cocoa-nut milk, and palusame, a great delicacy, made from the taro-leaves and cocoa-nut cream. Then a mysterious dish, or rather leaf, was handed round, which the Europeans treated coldly, but which was received with marked distinction by the natives. It was a sad-coloured, filmy mass, and was considered a great treat, as it consisted of green worms (*palolo*), that appear in the sea at certain intervals, according to the state of the moon. From time to time cocoa-nuts with the tops knocked off were presented, and we drank out of them and passed them on. At intervals fresh banana-leaves were handed to the guests, and by the time the banquet was half completed it was found how unnecessary plates were; and there might not be a knife or fork in the world for all anyone cared! As for French *chefs*—well,

nobody ever enjoyed a dinner more than the strangers from far-away 'Peretania' appreciated the pleasure of being made welcome at such a delightful feast.

When everyone had thoroughly enjoyed the island fare, a few appropriate speeches were made. A chief who sat at the foot of the—well, the board, after proposing the health of 'Tusitala' (the writer of tales), who replied in a few kindly words to his island friends, commenced the function of sending round the kava. *He* would make no mistake about the order in which it should be served. The large kava bowl was placed before him, and taking a small bowl of polished cocoa-nut, he filled it with kava, while he chanted in a loud voice to whom it was to be taken. It was to 'Tusitala,' who clapped his hands while the servitor took it to him. Before drinking he held up the basin, and looking towards his guests said, 'Ia manuia!' (Here's to you!); to which everyone answered, 'Soi fua!' (May you live long!) Next it was passed to Mrs. Louis Stevenson, the same formula of 'Ia manuia!' and 'Soi fua!' always

being repeated; then to Mrs. Stevenson, our host's mother, a clever, delightful old Scotch lady, who heartily toasted all present. Soon the chief shouted in Samoan it was for the 'New great lady,' and the cup was taken to my friend. Then he ordered the kava to be carried to 'Matalanumoana,' and while we speculated as to who that could be, it was brought smilingly to me. On inquiring what that meant, it was translated as 'The fair young stranger with blue eyes from over the seas,' and to the end of our sojourn in Samoa that name stuck to me, the smallest children rolling it out. When the kava had been served to everyone, we returned to the verandah, while there were mysterious preparations among the natives—of which we were supposed to know nothing—for another surprise in honour of their loved 'Tusitala.' The time was passed pleasantly chatting, and nearly everyone smoking cigarettes.

At Vailima all are inveterate smokers, and all scorn to smoke anything but cigarettes made by themselves of their own American tobacco; and, as

Louis Stevenson remarked, 'We are slaves to our own special brand.' They had a terrible reminiscence of having run out of their tobacco for, I think, two days, while cruising on board their yacht the *Casco*. The beef might 'give out,' or the flour might 'give out,' but—their tobacco !

As we sat there, every few minutes picturesque natives flitted across through the blackness, lighting their way with torches ; all were smiling and excited with the important business on hand. When a deputation of natives announced that the arrangements were completed, we adjourned to another native house, smaller than the one in which the banquet was held. The ground was thickly strewn with mats, and at one side a raised platform was erected, on which were about a dozen natives, all in very gala attire, their bodies polished and shining with cocoa-nut oil, and all wearing wreaths and garlands of hibiscus blossom, their hair oiled and elaborately combed out. They sat in two rows—man and woman alternately—and behind sat some few who beat drums and chanted along with

the principals in front. We all sat on the floor, the tobacco was passed round, and we gave ourselves up to the enjoyment of witnessing the *siva*, or native dance. They chanted extempore verses concerning all present, swaying their supple bodies to the rhythm, moving their hands and arms in lithe, fantastic movements, now fast, now slow, and as far as possible illustrating by their actions the bulk of the songs. When the first part was over they rose, and the principal actors separately went through whole scenes in pantomime illustrative of playing a long game of cricket, rowing, and suffering the pangs of starvation. This latter was realistically portrayed, and finally, when the sufferer was fortunate enough to procure food (a banana), he was so far gone that he could not eat. The idea was cleverly carried out.

When the performance was ended—at least, when ‘Tusitala’ suggested it was, for the Samoans would have continued with repetitions for hours longer—we gave the actors a hearty cheer, and, shaking hands with each one, thanked them cordially

for their pains. Then we picked our way through the dew-laden grass to Vailima, and the horses were brought round. There was much kicking and plunging, for most of these island horses appear to have a most deep-rooted prejudice against their neighbours' steeds, and there is generally a struggle to get at each other, obviously to have it out there and then and the matter settled.

It was an animated and picturesque scene : dozens of slim, wiry horses—for most of the people had brought servants, who rode also—gaily bedecked natives flitting hither and thither, and the fitful glare from the torches throwing fantastic lights and shadows over all. After much excitement, and no little merriment, and a good stirrup-cup, all were mounted, and one by one trotted out into the night, whence shouts of ' Good-night,' ' Tofa,' ' Soi fua,' came ringing back. The Samoan guests were soon out of earshot, but it was some little time before the voices of the officers of an English warship—two or three of whom had been present at the *fête*—died away. It was their first visit to

Vailima, and they evidently experienced great difficulty in following the track in the intense darkness. Scraps of conversation of the following description were heard :

‘ Say, old man, where are you ? ’

‘ Oh ! I don’t know. Where are you ? ’

‘ Heaven knows ! but my brute seems to know where every tree with prickles exists on the island.’

However, after a little forcible and authoritative language concerning thorn-trees and island horses in general, all was silence. So we returned to the dining-room, where our wreaths were doffed, and, after talking over the events of the evening, we suddenly discovered how tired and sleepy we all were ; so, bidding one another ‘ Good-night,’ we each drifted off with a lantern to our mats and mosquito-nets.

But what a delightful recollection the forty-second birthday party of our brilliant author will always be to the few who had the good-fortune to be present !

CHAPTER III

OUR ISLAND HOME

AFTER a few days, when we had settled down to the island life and become quite accustomed to the names the natives had bestowed on us, namely, Tamaitai and Matalanumoana, Mafulu who was of little use in the house, as most of his time was taken up working on the plantation, ushered in one morning a pleasant-looking youth called Tuvale, who had come from a distant village far round the coast to be our 'house-boy.' He appeared about thirteen ; but as Samoans are full grown at fifteen, and have no idea of their own ages, it is difficult to judge correctly ; and, as they say themselves, it does not matter what age they are ! Mafulu introduced him as his 'father' (they have vague ideas concerning relationships). However, in the course of conversa-

tion he referred to him as 'my uncle,' and by the time he had quite finished he was his 'brother,' although, possibly, they only met for the first time in their lives the previous day. After a long tirade, of which none of us understood one-half, as Mafulu insisted on interspersing his remarks with extraordinary 'English' words, and we possessed only a mere smattering of Samoan, he carried Tuvale out to the harness-room, where he explained the stove and gave him an exaggerated and highly coloured account of his duties and responsibilities. It was all meant in good faith ; but when he at last took his departure, we found Tuvale reduced to a sullen frame of mind and on the verge of tears. However, he soon brightened and became interested in the 'tongafities,' as he called the pot, fryingpan, stove, and all the culinary implements we possessed. In his remote village such paraphernalia were unknown ; the only thing used was a large broad-bladed knife, which nearly all Samoan households possess, and which goes the round of the entire family. He had not the slightest idea how to use a fork, and was immensely

tickled with us for thinking it at all necessary ; but he quickly learned the use of things, and it was enough to show him once how anything should be cooked, as he always remembered afterwards.

At first he was inclined to be very simple in his methods, and staggered into the room with the steaming black pot, which he lumped down on the edge of the table, and then withdrew to the door to observe our further movements. He was surprised when we discouraged this system of serving food, but received the idea of placing the viands on dishes as a great innovation, and hastened to empty everything, irrespective of ingredients, on to one plate. When this style was objected to also, he began to get a little tired and to lose heart, and almost sat down and wept over the hopeless capriciousness of white women. However, a good mess of food rallied his spirits, and when he found how harmless we were he made himself very useful and obliging, with the result that before he had been twenty-four hours in our service he had become a real comfort. Forks he never learned to manage, and after many

futile efforts to pick something up with one, he always ended by surreptitiously lifting the food with his fingers and spiking it on the end of the fork. With spoons it was different: they soon became a necessity of daily life with Tuvalu, for, after he had conscientiously laid out all our properties in the way of dinner-service, which did not amount to a dozen pieces, including plates, knives, and forks, he always secreted a spoon in the cook-house for his own special edification. However, his luxurious habits did not stop at depriving us of one of our meagre stock of table implements, for in a few days' time he found it impossible to carry a hot dish without a 'tapa,' as he called everything in the shape of towels or material, to prevent his brown fingers from being burned. The fame of his cooking spread rapidly among the youthful and idle of the neighbourhood, and frequently an interested audience assembled to gaze upon his culinary feats. His affectations on these occasions, and the important manner in which he flourished knives and forks before the unsophisticated eyes of the natives, were delightful to see.

All natives' eyes brighten and their teeth gleam at the word 'pua' (pig), and Tuvala was no exception to his race. When it happened to be pig, or canned sausages, or ham for dinner, his song of triumph from the cook-house was superb; and the care and solicitude with which he tended the sausages while they bubbled and boiled in the fryingpan, or the pig baked in the oven, were entirely edifying. It could always be ascertained how the cooking progressed, for the song waxed warlike and triumphant as the food became ready, when it was served with great style and solemnity. But should there be nothing in the shape of pig—only vegetables, fruit, and rice, or even beef—his song became sad and mournful, till at last it degenerated into a plaintive dirge. He was very fond of milk and jam, and when he was given his supply of food for one meal, I suggested to his inexperience the order in which it would be best to eat the things. But it was unnecessary: he would eat his taro first, then dip his sausages into the milk, and munch up his bread-and-jam with them.

The day he arrived we told Mafulu he would have to put the boy up in his native hut ; to which he cordially agreed, and added, ' Cipau gone !'

' Gone where ?' asked Tamaitai. Then, in a mixture of Samoan and English, he explained :

' She one fool. Oh ! no good—she better away. Me get 'nother wife bymby !' It was evidently satisfactory, for Mafulu became quite a dandy, and had his hair dyed and elaborately oiled and combed to stand straight up ; he also made a striking addition to his costume in the shape of a large half-dollar hat, which he donned in the evenings when he had finished working in the plantation and came to gossip with Tuvala on the back verandah. We heard that Cipau had gone down to the beach and made loud complaints against Mafulu ; she said that he had treated her most cruelly. Among the terrible atrocities she recounted as most damning evidence against him were : first, that twice he had refused to bake the bread-fruit, and had left her to put it among the stones to cook ; secondly, on three or four occasions he had growled at her ; and thirdly,

once, when she had spoken quite nicely to him, he had failed to answer ! For a few days she aired her grievances and received the sympathy of girls of her own class on the beach, and then we never saw Cipau or heard of her again. Her people belonged to a village far round the coast, and she had returned to them, and probably to a more appreciative husband.

From the day of our arrival at the cottage our circle of friends and acquaintances widened rapidly ; most of our neighbours hastened to do us honour and make us feel welcome and at home. And though few of them could speak English, still, it was not difficult in a short time to pick up enough words and phrases of their language to say all that was necessary when we met. Absolute courtesy and politeness are the principal features of Samoan life, and as they were all so amiable and gracious, it was easy to be kindly and pleasant in return. It is really an extremely difficult language to learn thoroughly ; the grammar is prolix and complicated. But a superficial, globe-trotter knowledge is easily

acquired ; and one thing that makes it more simple is the elastic nature of certain phrases—one remark goes such a long way in conversation ; for though a saying is repeated two or three times, the natives receive it as sympathetically on the third occasion as in the first instance. Then, they delighted in teaching us the native names for everything within sight—the trees, birds, fruits and flowers, even down to the ‘ loi ’ (ants) and ‘ lingo lingo ’ (crickets).

Everything went smoothly and well ; there was only one element to disturb the serenity of our existence in our forest home on the mountain slopes of this coral-bound island, and that was the inconvenient conduct of our fowls. However, they were not singular in their habits, they only behaved in the accepted manner of South Sea island hens in general, who do not lay eggs for their grasping owners, but for their own private edification. They resent any attempt to take their eggs from them, and retire with great secrecy into the bush or under the house, and after having laid them, emerge with much subtlety and cunning from the very opposite

corner of the verandah where they are laid. Their great hope is to be left unmolested to bring up a large brood of chickens ; but more often it happens that the rats and lizards find the nests, and promptly eat up the contents. Sometimes, inside a great clump of weed at the root of a banana-tree some sagacious little bird managed to elude her enemies, and after a few weeks proudly emerged with a crowd of tiny chicks. But notwithstanding Mafulu's care when he locked them up at night, the ranks were rapidly thinned, and rarely more than half a dozen of each brood lived to grow up. Many of the fowls were the quaintest-looking creatures, not at all like the sleek birds to which we are accustomed in England, but fluffy bundles of long feathers, which all grew the reverse way.

One afternoon, as we were peacefully lounging on deck chairs on the verandah and looking through the mail which had that morning been dropped at Apia by the San Francisco packet, we were roused by hearing alarming shrieks from the plantation. They rapidly came nearer, when one of those funny

little hens, who was bringing up a large brood of forest-bred chickens, burst through the bushes in a most disordered condition, and creating quite a disturbance. She was surrounded by her family, who were holding on to either end of some long object, which she was holding by the middle. The poor thing was in the greatest distress, and with piteous cries was endeavouring to make the greedy youngsters let go—a thing they stoutly declined to do. At last, by a skilful manœuvre, she managed to shake them off, when she simply flew to the foot of a cocoa palm, and excitedly battered the dangling brown object which she held in her bill against the trunk of the tree. We managed to keep the chickens off till she had finished, when, with congratulatory clucks and one last bang she released the enemy, which proved to be a centipede between six and seven inches long. The little bird evidently knew the danger, and at the risk of her own life gallantly rescued her unruly young family.

Owing to the eccentricities of the fowls eggs were scarce ; so the girls in the neighbouring hamlets

brought any eggs they could find. There were three girls in Tanungamanono, the nearest village, who often made eggs their excuse for paying us long visits. They brought little bundles of 'fua moa' (fruit of the hen) tied up in pieces of bark cloth. This was considered the most discreet way to carry them, as the tapa kept them cool and covered from the sun; had they been brought in a basket, they might only narrowly escape being half-cooked before reaching their destination. After the usual salutations our three friends would arrange themselves on the verandah and continue to carry on a desultory conversation with us; then they would beg me to play the banjo to them, and as long as I strummed they never tired of singing sivas and keeping time with their arms and bodies. But they rarely spoke to each other, and it was explained afterwards that they thought it would be very bad manners if they conversed together, as, not understanding the language, we might think they were talking of us. Even the poorest Samoan appreciated the courtesy of good feeling, and some Europeans

might with advantage take a lesson in courteous regard for the feelings of others from these dark islanders. Before departing our friends presented us with sweet-scented 'pouas'—white flowers like huge gardenias, which Samoans of all ages love to wear in the hair—and, asking in how many days they might come again—a mere empty form, for never by any chance did they come on the day fixed—they smilingly took their leave, and hastened to pay visits to their relatives and friends, in order to report the wonderful tale of their visit to the Tamaitai and Matalanumoana. By the time the recital had been gone through three or four times the events of the afternoon took the shape of the most miraculous concatenation of adventures.

Tuvale was quite a useful addition to our small establishment, and soon began to take considerable pains with all the duties he had to perform. He revelled in dispensing hospitalities of all kinds, and when guests arrived he rushed to take the saddles off their horses, then came sidling round the

verandah, and approached me in a mysterious manner, insinuatingly rubbing himself against the chairs and wall in his progress ; then in a whisper he asked if the guests would ' stay tiffin,' and if he would open ' pea-soupo,' as most islanders call all canned food, no matter of what it may be composed. Evidently the first tins imported had been of that homely soup. He was greatly disappointed if they declined, but on their accepting he crowed with joy, and hastened to concoct several fried or baked delicacies. Then he gathered hibiscus and allamanda blossoms, and decorated the room with a Samoan artistic taste that was very pleasing to the eye. Tuvalé's greatest success lay in his pancakes, I think ; he made them with flour and cocoa-nut juice—the latter taking the place of milk, and sometimes of eggs, too. Then, when all was ready, he would serve the food in an elaborate manner ; after which he took up his position with a fly-flapper, and endeavoured to keep the table free of marauding insects during the meal.

A large dish of rice generally formed part of our

tiffin, so once a week Tuvale rode down to Apia to bring up a sackfull, and any other stores that were to be procured there. Although the storekeeper assured us his rice was of a quality superior to any that was to be had in 'Frisco or London, it was inhabited by hundreds of little black weevils, which afforded our youth delightful sport. He spread the rice out on newspapers on the verandah, and then the sight of the insects called up all the natural love of the chase that was lying dormant in his nature, and with gleaming eyes and sundry bloodthirsty ejaculations the hunt progressed, and at the end of a couple of hours every weevil had been extracted. These sporting days became famous, for always after Tuvale had been marketing on the beach two little girls arrived, and begged him to allow them to join in the chase of 'loi,' as they called all small creeping insects; sometimes he graciously allowed them to help him, but more often they had to content themselves with remaining spectators of the fascinating pastime.

Though the weevils were successfully disposed

of, it was difficult to keep the food free of the enormous quantity of all kinds of winged and creeping things. Ants were everywhere, and at first we spent much time in shaking them from our clothes and removing them from the food, milk, &c. However, it is wonderful how quickly one gets used to these things, and in a short time we were almost oblivious of their presence. All the stores had to be kept in pickle-jars or biscuit-tins, but even the latter failed to keep out the invaders. After helping oneself to sugar, if the stopper were not immediately replaced in the jar ants were on the watch and swarmed in, when it was impossible to dislodge them. The only way to avoid swallowing them was when they had been put with the sugar into the tea or coffee, and they floated to the surface, when it was easy to skim them off. Our principal room had four doors and three windows ; the latter were destitute of glass and consisted of small wooden doors, so during the day they had to stand open with the doors, else the room would have been in semi-darkness. There was also a space between

the walls and the roof, which was supported on posts. So, as there was no use in attempting to keep the innumerable spiders, cockroaches, lizards, rats and ants outside, as they would be sure to effect an entrance one way or another, we concluded it wiser to give them every opportunity to depart when they would.

There is a standard joke among white settlers, which is, that people who have lived long among the islands, after they return to civilisation seldom altogether lose the habit of tapping their bread on the edge of the table before putting a piece into their mouths. A yarn is told of a certain eminent man who, after many years of South Sea island life, paid a flying visit to New York, where a distinguished society took pains to entertain him and do him honour. During one very grand banquet it was observed that he tapped his bread unceasingly on the edge of the table, and someone at last feeling constrained to inquire the reason, he replied, absent-mindedly, that he did not care to eat more ants in his bread than was necessary; at

which his hosts concluded he had evidently sojourned too long under a tropic sun in the Pacific!

Numbers of Solomon Islanders are imported to Samoa to do work on plantations which natives would not dream of doing. Indeed, Samoans do not really require to work, and they seldom do so. They build their houses of palm-leaves; the bread-fruits, bananas, cocoa-nuts, taro, and yams grow of themselves; and those fruits and vegetables, with the addition now and again of a pig—which they rear on cocoa-nut—are all the luxuries that an ordinary Samoan can wish. For clothes they have tapa, which they make of the bark of the paper mulberry-tree beaten very thin; and fine mats, woven mostly by the old women. Then the men spear fish in the sea, and the women and girls catch quantities of crayfish in the streams which flow down from the mountains. There was a humorous-looking Solomon Island girl, who did not look more than fifteen years old, and her 'black boy' husband, who helped Mafulu to weed and keep down the noxious and ever-spreading sensitive plant, with its many

prickles and pretty pink flowers, and look after our fruit-trees generally. For lack of a better name we called her Topsy, which, unfortunately, hurt her feelings a little, for when we were able to understand each other, she indignantly protested : ‘ No Topsy ; him good—him call Monkey ! ’ She was a good little creature, and worked with unceasing energy among the bananas and citrons ; her constant companion was a short clay pipe, black with use, which when not smoking she stuck into one of the lobes of her ears. Solomon Islanders have their ears bored at a very early age, and round shells are inserted into the holes which are made, as it is regarded as a great improvement to their personal appearance, and the man with the most distended lobes is awarded the palm for beauty among the local dudes. Billy, Monkey’s husband, was a nice enough youth, only he was not very reliable. One night Monkey fled screaming from their shanty, Billy pursuing her with a murderous-looking club, with which he once or twice felled her to the ground ; but she managed to scramble on to her feet and escape ; and

it was just in time, for when Mafulu and some other natives secured Billy, he had a large knife, which he was just panting to plunge into poor Monkey. She was very much battered and bruised, and terrified lest her husband would get at her ; she said she had been sleeping when he banged her, and then she ran away. Next day Billy was repentant, and explained his conduct to this effect :

‘ Me love Monkey. Me no hurt Monkey. Devil get in boy, and him devil kill Monkey. Billy no kill Monkey. Him devil all e time ! ’ Monkey appeared quite satisfied with this explanation, and had evidently lost all fear of her husband, and though her poor body still bore eloquent evidence of her narrow escape the previous night, she was quite willing to return to him and say nothing more about it. She accepted the situation in a thoroughly philosophical spirit, and seemed to look upon murderous assaults as one of the necessary evils accompanying the possession of a husband. As she was content to let bygones be bygones,

there was nothing more to be said on the subject ; except that Tamaitai took the opportunity to warn the young man that if he was stupid enough to allow ' him devil ' inside him again, as she could not beat devil, she would take big stick and beat him, and then devil would be punished. Billy made many protestations concerning his good behaviour for the future, and as long as we knew them he behaved in an exemplary manner towards Monkey, and, indeed, was a model Solomon Island husband.

One morning she appeared smiling from ear to ear, and carrying a small piccaninny under her arm. She and her husband were both terribly disgusted with it at first. ' Him no good,' she said with disgust ; ' him like white man. Ugh ! ' And certainly the baby was very fair to be the child of such black parents. However, in a few days they were both reassured, and, chuckling with joy, exclaimed, ' Oh ! him quite good !—him got black ! ' and sure enough the little savage was becoming as dark as its ancestors. Every morning Monkey would bustle up with it under her arm, and a huge knife in her

hand, to work on the plantation. A banana-leaf was cut and put in the shade under a tree, and this small morsel of naked humanity was laid on it, and there it would lie for hours, playing with its fingers and purring to itself at intervals ; it never seemed to cry or give anyone any trouble. We had been told how common infanticide was among Solomon Islanders living in Samoa, and were afraid that Billy might see fit to do away with the little one ; so we praised it very much, and told them it was a wonderfully good piccaninny. But a small present placed in its chubby black little fist did more to raise it in the estimation of father and mother than anything else. In a short time they insisted on having it christened ' Marie ' at the Catholic Mission, and became absolute nuisances of parental pride. Although it was always referred to as ' him piccaninny,' it was a veritable girl ; but then everything is spoken of in the masculine gender by the Solomon Islanders. A curious feature about the quaint, energetic little Monkey and her husband was that they were singularly grateful for any trifling kind-

ness shown them, and made pathetic little offerings in return. They were very home-sick, like the majority of transplanted islanders, and longed for their three years to be up, that they might return home. When asked if it was their people they wished to see, they shook their heads, and Billy, stamping his foot, said, ‘Just get him foot on Solomon Island again. Ah! too much bread-fruit and taro here—good pig all e time in Solomon!’ And Monkey, smacking her lips, echoed, ‘Good pig all e time!’ During the long years of their exile they had evidently invested their native island with a roseate halo of luxury and comfort; for in reality pigs were no more plentiful there than in Samoa, and on their return all their relatives would promptly pounce upon their monetary savings and chest full of all sorts of useless odds and ends and old clothes, which the Solomon Islanders always collect and take home in triumph. Often they never even reached home; for they seemed to have a tendency to embark on board a ship that was going to trade with several other islands before calling at San

Christoval, in the Solomon group. Then they would land at one of these strange islands and remain there. Sometimes they had first to go to Sydney before they could get a boat to take them home ; in which case it was very hard on the poor unsophisticated islanders. They were perfectly ignorant of life, and in the big seaport there were always number of people ready to take them under their wing, and it required little instruction to show them how to paint bright colours on the dark and evil slums of Sydney. In a day or two they were fleeced of every farthing of their three years' pay, and the consequence was they often had no alternative but to re-enlist themselves as 'hired labour,' and drift off to Queensland or some Pacific island, where the Kanaka take life easily.

When Billy was asked if he ever saw white men eaten, he protested vehemently, and assured us it was not his island, but an adjacent one, where they did that. It is a remarkable thing, but every Solomon Islander I ever met, with the exception of one old hoary heathen, no matter from which of the

group he came, always asserted it was on a neighbouring island where they ate folk.

A Government official in Apia told us that one day he happened to be riding slowly behind a number of black boys and their families who had completed their time on the island and were trooping to the beach to embark for the Solomons. Walking last of the gang he noticed a woman carrying a small piccaninny in her arms, and every little while her husband dropped behind the others and spoke in a rough, bullying way to her. He was evidently urging her to do something to which she objected, for she always shook her head, and said, 'No.' Still he kept pointing to the baby and abusing her, and at last, when they came to a turn in the track where the river ran below, the man suddenly seized the infant from its mother and pitched it over the rocks. Our informant said he immediately flung himself off his horse and clambered down the rocks ; but there was no sign of the baby ; it had been swept away by the current, which was running strong after recent rains.

We were surprised one afternoon to see a tall bronzed man stroll up the path to our house. The appearance of a white man and a stranger at such a time was very mysterious, for the next mail steamer that would touch at Apia was not due for three weeks. But as he approached and hailed us with an English greeting we recognised a friend from home whom we had recently met on our travels, and who was Governor of what he called a neighbouring island —only about 770 miles off! He was taking a holiday, the first one for many years, and had landed that morning at Apia from a trading schooner that was carrying cargo to several Pacific islands. She was going on to Pango Pango, where she would lie for some days, and then return to pick him up before starting for Suva and Levuka, in Fiji, whence twice a year a steamer ran with mails to his island. Tuvale was greatly excited at this unexpected visitor, and as usual became absorbed in the contemplation of certain ‘pea-soupo’ and in making an enormous fire in the stove. From his importance and solemnity he evidently intended to surpass him-

self on this occasion, and several hours were spent by him between the stove in the harness-room and a native oven he had constructed in a corner of the clearing, where a small pig was being treated for dinner 'faa Samoa,' which seemed the most successful way to cook pig.

Our long-exiled compatriot was very welcome, and it was pleasant to hear all the news from the islands he had visited, and also of friends at Tonga, whence he had just come. Island life is limited in most respects, and it is dreadful to relate how rapidly dwellers therein lose touch with the world, and begin to take a far keener interest in the neighbouring islands, their inhabitants, and the boats that cruise among them, than in the important matters of Europe or America. This friend of ours, however, was an exception to the rule : he was thirsting for news of home, and we were glad to be able to give him some local gossip which was comparatively recent. It was interesting to note how the insular Britisher was far more strongly accentuated in his personality than when he left England many

years ago. It is often the way with men who have lived solitary lives for a long time among the islands, where, in the absence of society of any description, they have to depend entirely upon themselves. Should there be no game to afford sport of some kind, and they do not take to drink, they generally have recourse to books. Sometimes they have only the most trashy, trivial works; still, they are content to read and re-read them with avidity. They love all the weekly and monthly magazines. Newspapers are not so highly prized—the news is stale, and as a rule they are not quite sure what it is all about. Our guest was devoted to England, and longed to see it again, though he was bound to confess that the climate would probably kill him. Theoretically, the idea of Home is charming, but in reality it means something very different to those who have passed long years under Southern skies. As the afternoon wore on he told us all about his island, which lay away to the west of Samoa, and which he described in glowing colours. He spun many yarns about the natives, who were friendly and agreeable, but

who seemed renowned for nothing but the making of fine mats, which was evidently the only industry. There were, altogether, seven white men. So, he cheerily remarked, there was always someone to speak to. The only drawback appeared to be that there was only one white woman—and she was a nun! However, he spoke enthusiastically of his cook, a Hindoo, whom he had specially imported; and fortunately this artist's talents amply compensated for all other shortcomings. He was extremely kind and hospitable, and pressed us to come and visit his island during our further wanderings, holding out many inducements to tempt us thither, among which we were told we should have a very beautiful house, built on a promontory of the island; we should have horses, and special *fêtes* would be organised for our benefit. But the terrible idea that after landing it would be impossible to quit the island before the next boat was due—six months hence—made us pause before accepting this kind invitation. Observing our hesitation, as a final and irresistible inducement we were offered the entire services of the cook

during our visit. But even this last sacrifice on the part of our kindly friend did not induce us to accept the invitation.

After hearing of the wonderful cunning with which the Hindoo concocted subtle curries and ragoûts, and how much he was appreciated, I felt a little nervous as to how our very amateur efforts would be received. Though Tuvale had a predilection for canned foods—and they certainly were a great boon in the islands—still, it is an achievement with which to be satisfied when a tolerably good dinner can be managed without opening a tin, especially when European guests are being entertained ; so this day it was almost entirely native, though not all prepared ‘faa Samoa.’ Early that morning a large jar of turtle-soup had been sent to us—an offering from a friend on board a man-of-war then lying in the bay—and it now came in opportunely for dinner. There were large pink crayfish from the neighbouring streams, the roast pig, egg-fruit, and palusame ; fried bananas, and avocapears, beaten up with pepper and salt, served as a

savoury; and, to finish up, a dish of mangoes and a large smooth-leaved pine-apple from our own garden, followed by Samoan coffee. It was an anxious few minutes while Tuvale with the greatest ceremony handed round the dishes, though I must say his manner went a long way to inspire confidence. *He* had no doubts whatever, but was simply bursting with vanity and self-satisfaction; and he was not far wrong, for the pig had come out splendidly, and the miti sauce was perfect; and all our fears were soon at rest, for our guest had ‘asked for more!’

CHAPTER IV

CHRISTMAS-TIME

TOWARDS the latter half of December a hurricane was predicted ; and, indeed, it seemed imminent. The noise of the breakers dashing against the barrier reef, generally a lulling sound in the distance, had become like a continuous roar of artillery ; there was a wild look in the sky, and the wind moaned ominously as it swept through the trees. Mr. Stevenson sent post-haste, begging us to come up to them at once, he thinking it dangerous for anyone to remain in our house during a storm, as it would likely be blown away. So we told Tuvale to take our kitten over to Mafulu's hut, gave him plenty of food, promised to return 'teaou' (to-morrow), locked the door, and away we went, Micaele, who had brought the message, carrying our bags. That

evening the elements wore a threatening aspect, and many preparations were made to prevent Vailima from being blown in during the night. However, we need not have been anxious, for next morning we woke to find the house and plantation intact ; but still the wise people shook their heads and said ' it ' must come soon.

The Stevensons would not hear of us leaving till the weather was safe for our shanty ; so we settled to stay another night, and in the interim passed the time delightfully. It was one of the most glorious mornings imaginable, even for that wonderful Samoan climate, where the beauty of the landscape is exceptional. The fathomless blue of the sky was cloudless, and as the sun rose in the heavens the dew disappeared off the palms and shrubs, leaving the foliage marvellously green and fresh. Soon after an early breakfast the slim, wiry, island horses were brought round by a shouting and capering crowd of outdoor boys, who raced around gathering scarlet and cream-coloured hibiscus blossoms, which they fixed in the forehead bands of the horses ; and

two smiling native girls, who were visiting their Samoan friends at Vailima, wove little garlands of many-coloured xenias, which they tied round the necks of Teuila's horse and mine. The white-clad riders and the island horses, some with their high Mexican saddles, and all with their coil of rope hung on the off side of the saddle, presented a picturesque appearance as we trotted across the lawn and, passing through the great wooden gate, which the natives had rushed down to open and shout 'Tofa, soi fua!' plunged into the mountain forest. As we passed under the trees, tasselled and shrouded in creepers and ferns, the fua sang with its sweet liquid note, and the green-and-yellow jao chattered and jeered in its voice of perpetual impertinence and seeming mimicry; while as we picked our way slowly down the rough and rocky track, hundreds of black lizards, some lively and fleet, others old and corpulent, flitted from stone to stone, or raced round the trunks of trees and pretended to be small branches and twigs. And always as we descended from the mountains and the sun rose the trees

vibrated in the heat ; not a breath of air stirred even a palm-frond, so still and teeming was the atmosphere. After passing Tanungamanono, where all the villagers, headed by Fono, the chief, and his wife and children, came out to greet their much-loved Tusitala and shower good-wishes after him as he continued on his way, the road improved, and we were able to proceed at an easy canter, a pace affected by all island and bush horses. Most of these animals are unshod in the islands, and it seemed to do their hoofs less harm than trotting. It was not long after getting on to the firm road that we reached the beach and swept into Apia at a good pace, pulling up at the principal store, where Louis Stevenson was bent on buying up everything that could possibly give pleasure or amusement to the guests at his forthcoming Christmas party. Everyone we met was delighted to see him ; for he had not been very well for a few days, and rumour, always violently on the alert in Samoa, had magnified his indisposition into the ‘beginning of the end’ ; so his many friends were doubly glad to

see him well. If he did not get a chance of shopping often, he certainly was very thorough when he was at it : everything he saw in the store instantly reminded him of someone to whom it might be useful, and was purchased accordingly. This firm had specially imported a huge consignment of all kinds of suitable things for the white settlers to buy for Christmas gifts ; but whoever came after our little party would be woefully disappointed, for Mr. Stevenson bought up everything that was at all nice, from dress, jewellery, carved oak cabinets, umbrellas, &c., to hammocks, tobacco-pouches, and toys. Having completed our purchases, and when, in fact, there was nothing left worth buying, we returned to our horses, which we had tied up under a large candle-nut tree at the gate of the store yard. Here we found Micaele, smiling and mysterious ; and, with the exception of his master, who seemed to have expected him, we were all surprised to see the youth. However, we let him take the horses to the hotel and proceeded on foot along the beach, calling in at sundry stores on the way and buying bridles,

a saddle, and some horrible fancy note paper, which is a joy to all Samoans. At last, when all the purchases were completed, we adjourned to the Chinaman's for tiffin. Kai Sue was a great character, and his shanty was the only place in the shape of a restaurant where anything eatable was to be had.

When we had to visit Apia for our mail-bag or stores, we always made a point of stopping for tiffin or dinner at his place. The dining-room was a large bare section of the building, open at one end on to the coral beach, and the blue ocean sparkled to within a few feet of the dining-table; not even an illustration out of a 'Frisco paper helped to break the austerity of the surrounding boards. Kai Sue and his factotum, Ulla, always treated us with marked distinction, and one day, when we had been down in Apia for the mails, and as usual adjourned for dinner to the restaurant, Ulla's zeal on our behalf was quite embarrassing. When we entered some three or four men were sitting eating at the table, and before anyone could demur or say

a word the miraculously thin and energetic Ulla had hustled them out of the room into some side-apartment ; and in a few seconds he had torn off the many-coloured tablecloth, and, with the remnants of their meal, had despatched it after them. In less time than it takes to tell a clean cover was spread, and as he dashed in and out with freshly opened tins of meat, butter, and marmalade, we protested against the violence to which the inoffensive diners had been subjected. Ulla just shook his long, loose-jointed limbs a little more than usual, as he lumped down in front of us some specialty of Kai Sue's, and said :

‘Oh ! him no good. Boss say to me, “Ladies come ; chuck rubbish.” Ulla chuck ! Savvy ?’

This day, as always on our arrival, Ulla rushed in and removed the tablecloth of chronic impurity, replacing it by one of immaculate whiteness ; serviettes were also produced, and a remarkably good tiffin was served. There never was anything fit to drink at Kai Sue's except lager, so now the mysterious presence of Micaele was explained.

Louis Stevenson had thought that girls generally liked champagne, and had sent down a consignment of Dry Monopole in ample time to have it cooled for tiffin. In his busy life he was continually considering others, and how to make them happy ; and here was a little instance of his forethought, for the wine was entirely for the gratification of his friends, as he infinitely preferred for himself Kai Sue's lager.

Ulla scuttled about with the dishes, and towards the close of the meal Kai Sue himself left off giving orders to invisible Kanakas on the beach, and, leaning against the partition, yarned and gossiped about his former experiences. He had been captured by Bully Hayes and taken on board his schooner, where he remained as cook for two years, and now he loved to chatter about his late master. Bully was a noted man in the South Seas, and an audacious and daring character ; and time had made such an oracle of him that, when ordering a dish for dinner, it was customary to consult Kai Sue as to which Bully Hayes would have

ordered under similar circumstances ; and then, on being informed, it was discreet to choose likewise, as Bully seemed to have been rather subtle in his tastes for a buccaneer, and certainly knew the dishes in which his compulsory cook excelled. Kai Sue was very refined in his ideas, and deplored the life he led on board the schooner.

‘ Why did you stay ? ’ asked Louis Stevenson.

‘ Oh ! me made stay,’ replied the Chinaman. ‘ But vely bad fo’ me ; me no likey schooner. Me Chinaman and gentleman—Bully Hayes, d—— pirate ! ’ and in the heat of his refinement he hurled volleys of profanity at the person of the late Mr. Hayes.

After tiffin Mr. Stevenson produced some of his own special ‘ Three Castles,’ and while cigarettes were smoked we sat rejoicing in the cook’s reminiscences of the notorious Bully. Then Micaele appeared with the horses, and we started on our return to the mountains.

Passing a half-caste’s house, Tusitala pointed out a little Solomon Island girl who had come out to

stare at the white people, and he told me that two years previously, when her father and mother were leaving the island, the half-caste in whose house she now lived saw them throw the child into the jungle. He made his way to the spot and rescued the baby, but guessed if he restored her to the parents they would just drop her somewhere else ; so he had taken her home, and brought her up ever since. It seemed to be a very common trick of the Solomon Islanders to throw away their piccaninnies, to save themselves the trouble of looking after them on board ship.

During the homeward ride, while Louis Stevenson was talking brilliantly and enthusiastically about the islands, literature, his friends at Home, and his much-loved brown islanders in the South Seas, his eyes were never at rest, and as we rode on nothing escaped his notice : birds, flowers, the tiny snow-white clouds hanging high in the blue empyrean, and the natives who passed by with a respectful ‘Talofa, Tusitala!’ As we neared Vailima, and were quickening our pace, glad to be

back in the mountains and away from the stagnation of the beach, we were startled by a homelike, familiar sound overhead, and, looking up, encountered the round and large-winking gaze of the barn owl. It was exactly the same as the ordinary type in England, but in Samoa it flies during the hottest sunshine by day, as well as by night. As we looked it was joined by its mate, to whom it had been screeching, and they slowly flapped away together. After this we often saw them hawking, and in the absence of mice probably making the best of lizards and rats.

It was remarkable, the complete lack of life of any description, except mosquitoes and gnats, in the dense parts of the forest. Only once I saw a tiny animal; it hopped on its hind legs like a kangaroo rat, and seemed to belong to that family. In another part of the forest Tamaitai saw one of the same kind. There were pigs, and black boys who had left their employers and run wild, and were considered very dangerous; but as one rarely came across them, they were not of much consequence.

After we had had a bath and changed our clothes, we had to tell all our adventures and experiences of the morning to Mrs. Stevenson, who was as interested in every little detail as if we had been visiting another island. When she heard of our tiffin at Kai Sue's she laughed at the remembrance of a certain dinner she once provided for her husband. It was when they first came to the island, and their cottage, which is now overshadowed by Vailima, was being built. They had been up superintending the carpenters all day, and late in the afternoon Mrs. Stevenson proposed to go home and get some dinner ready, and Louis was to follow later. They were bivouacking at the time in a native hut lower down the mountain, and had no regular servants. Mrs. Stevenson's thoughts were wrapt in the plot of some new drama that was formulating itself in her brain, so on entering the house she rolled a cigarette and sat down to think. 'In half an hour,' continued her husband, 'I arrived, famishing with hunger, and asked if it was not time we were having something to eat. My wife looked up and said,

“Yes; I am just wondering why they are not bringing in the dinner. You must be starving; I know I am. I wish they would make haste.”

“Who?” I asked. And then my wife woke out of her reverie to the remembrance that we were alone in a new country, with no retainers to do our bidding.’

After dinner we had some music, and then some natives came in, and we danced in the great hall, which had been completed. While we were enjoying ourselves one of the outdoor boys, the stalwart Laefoele, rushed into the hall, and, falling on his knees in a great state of perturbation in front of Mrs. Stevenson, burst forth, ‘Great lady, I think my wife no good. Please, you look my wife’s heart—you see good thing; that all right. You see bad thing—I make devil!’ He and his wife had been having a little difference of opinion, and in his implicit faith in the wisdom of Tusitala and the almost infallible powers of his wife, the simple retainer rushed to her to have his domestic worries settled.

Again elaborate precautions were taken to render the house impregnable to the coming hurricane, and we retired to sleep with the assurance ringing in our ears that through the night the roof would likely be blown off. However, a peaceful night was succeeded by a radiant dawn, and all the world smiling under a blazing blue sky.

There was no excuse for trespassing further on the kindness of our hosts; and, although the storm was still prophesied, Tamaitai said she must go, as our 'boys' and the kitten would be getting anxious; so after breakfast she insisted on starting, and it was settled that I should follow in the afternoon.

Sosimo, one of the best and most devoted of the house-boys, and who rejoiced in the dignified appellation of 'the butler,' was eloquent in his assertion that the hurricane was coming nearer: a branch had fallen off a tree near the house for no reason whatever—a certain portent of evil! This boy's predecessor had been a great character. It was shortly after the Stevensons had settled at

Vailima that one morning a tall, gaunt native from a very remote part of the island came to take up his abode as a house-boy. He was struck dumb with awe and admiration by the magnificence of Vailima and the white inhabitants. He was anxious to begin upon his duties at once, so while still standing in front of the house he was given a bucket of water, and told to take it to the room on the top verandah. He pointed up, and asked if it was there, and being answered in the affirmative, he seized the bucket in his teeth and, before anyone could prevent him, had swarmed up the post of the verandah, and, bounding over the railing, disappeared into the room. The whole family ran round the verandah and up the stairs to show this athletic new help the customary method of reaching those apartments. And when he saw this latest marvel of the white man, in the shape of a staircase, his joy knew no bounds, and for days he would do nothing but race up and down stairs, chuckling and crowing in an ecstasy of delirious excitement; and when his friends came to pay him visits he always took them without delay to see the

flight of stairs, and directed them how to run up and down.

Later in the day clouds began to roll up, and the sky showed signs of Sosimo's premonitions being verified at last. Mr. and Mrs. Stevenson begged me to stay ; but it was impossible to allow Tamaitai to remain alone all night in the shanty. So after tea I trudged off, timing myself to arrive before dark. As I followed the path through the scrub and lime-trees the sky became more and more lurid and threatening, and on entering the great forest the darkness crept up overhead and the rush of the storm was tremendous. The hurricane swept through the dense undergrowth, causing the great hanging parasites and lianas to grate and rattle against the trunks, riving branches from the trees and whirling them through the air along with cocoa-nuts, which came crashing to the ground. Then the rain came—and such a tropical downpour ! I hastened on ; but in a short time the road was a comparatively deep mountain torrent. It felt as if the elements were at war and in the midst of a

fierce combat, utilising as missiles cocoa-nuts and limbs of trees. One feels absurdly small and insignificant when alone and face to face with such sublime fury; so I scrambled up a little mound where a large tree was growing, and, curling myself in a hollow which afforded a little shelter, quietly awaited the turn of events. Once a cocoa-nut hit the stem not very high above my head, and for a moment it seemed as if the tree had been struck by lightning or uprooted by an earthquake. Then a branch, eighteen or twenty feet long, fell across the track a couple of yards off. The darkness was closing in every minute, the road had entirely evolved itself into a cataract, and the noises and crashings were becoming more terrible.

At last, when the folly of having stopped to take refuge was forcing itself upon me, I had a feeling that something alive was drawing near, and, peeping round the tree's bulky stem towards the mountains, I saw a weird figure approaching out of the gathering gloom. As it drew near it proved to be a gigantic Samoan woman—she must have been

close on six feet high. She was very lightly clad, and what little she had on was sticking close to her wet skin. She did not seem surprised when I emerged from my shelter, but after greeting me with 'Talofa, Matalanumoana,' calmly picked me up on her arm like a child, and stalked off through the rushing water. I mustered up all my Samoan for the occasion, and managed to make some remarks on the hurricane, and said she must be tired carrying me; but at this she only smiled, shook her head, and deliberately held on her way. By the time we reached the track that branched off to our house the worst of the storm had abated, and with many thanks to my benefactress we parted. At the turn of the road, on looking back I could just see the dark outline of this stalwart native standing where I had left her, and hear her cry of 'Tofa! Soi fua!' At our gate I found Tuvala sitting on the post, and, hailing me with shouts of joy, he frisked up the path to the house to announce the glad tidings of my safe return. Poor child! he had pined dreadfully, and his joy at

seeing one of us return was damped by the fear he was never to see the other again. However, he had been assured that I would come back, so had proceeded to make elaborate preparations for cooking 'pua,' and then took up his position at the gate.

We made inquiries among our friends concerning the tall Samoan woman ; but no one had heard of anyone answering the description, and no woman had been seen that day to pass down alone from the mountains to the beach. So my good genius remained a mystery.

The following day the San Francisco packet was expected to call at Apia for mails, so that night I was sitting up rather late, getting some home letters off. Suddenly an earthquake shook the house and made me blot my paper. For the sake of company I called over the partition to my friend, who had retired to bed some time previously, and remarked on the house shaking. A sleepy voice answered :

' Only earthquake. Silly you are. I'm sleeping ! '

In about five minutes, and while I was still soothing the kitten, who had desisted from the pursuit of spiders and cockroaches to jump upon my lap, a fearful noise shook the house to its foundations, and an excited voice from the other side of the partition demanded to know if war had broken out. It was only a large cocoa-nut which had dropped off the palm at the end of the house on to the corrugated-iron roof, and thence on to the verandah. Earthquakes are ordinary episodes of everyday occurrence, but a nut on an iron roof at midnight is something to remember!

On Christmas Eve Tuvale was up betimes, and from the elaborate preparations he made it was evident that he anticipated some function to take place of which we were ignorant. When questioned on the subject, he let fall vague hints concerning relatives, tapa, baskets, and alofa (presents) generally. In the morning we had some errands for him—messages of Christmas greeting to take to the British Consulate and one or two other houses. As he went to fetch the horse, I told him when he was

ready to come in and I would give him his orders. As I was finishing a note to Mrs. Cusack-Smith, I heard him shouting to me from the verandah ; which was surprising, as he never lost an excuse to come prowling into the room—all our ‘white man’s’ tongafities possessed such intense interest for him. Wondering what the cause of this reticence could be, I went to the door, and the reason he had not dismounted was revealed. He was seated on a barebacked horse, clad in a scarlet and white lava-lava, and on his brown legs a pair of very long black hose, which he had withdrawn from a rubbish-heap and secreted among his treasures, which he kept carefully hidden under a pile of wood in the cook-house. This day, being a sort of *fête*, he had considered a fitting occasion to wear them for the first time ; but as his feet were rather large, and any kind of covering for them a new experience, he had been unable to force them beyond the ankles of the stockings, so about twelve inches hung down from each foot. He was amazed and hurt at our evident amusement at this finishing touch to his

costume, and when he had received his orders rode off in dignified silence.

After he had gone a Samoan who lived near us returned from Apia with the alarming news that Mafulu had been run down and trampled by many solafanua (horses). It was very distressing, for he was an excellent man and a kindly creature ; but we were not allowed much time for sorrow, for as we were momentarily expecting his mangled body to be brought home, he came marching up at a swinging pace, and carrying the stores he had been sent to fetch. He was brimful of eagerness to tell us the exciting events, and hastened with great volubility to describe the accident. While he had been standing at the door of the store a horse-and-waggon dashed round the corner of the house, and before he could get out of the way he had been knocked down and the wheels had passed over his body. We were sympathetic ; which was quite unnecessary, for when he was asked if it hurt badly, he answered, ‘ Leai, me strong ; no hurt. White man, he die ; Samoan, him no hurt ! ’ And he was not far wrong, for if

the same accident had happened to a white man his ribs would likely have been crushed and many complications ensued. However, though the marks where the wheels had passed over his naked body were strongly accentuated, the skin was unbroken, and Mafulu bustled about, grating cocoa-nut for the fowls and fetching in fruit as if nothing had happened. Soon Tuvale returned in radiant good-humour ; the stockings had been a great success and the envy and admiration of his acquaintances. We heard afterwards that he would not deliver the packet to a servant, but insisted on the Consul's wife coming out to receive it in person, in order that she might have the benefit of his latest European outfit.

After his return we were not kept long in suspense as to the meaning of his morning preparations, for early in the afternoon crowds of natives began to arrive—whole families—and from their manner it was evident they had come to spend the day. After pleasant greetings, the first-comers seated themselves in the sitting-room ; but soon that was

full, and those who came later had to content themselves with the verandah, and before long some of them were even crowding into the cook-house, where they sat sweltering in the heat, augmented by the fire. All our kindly neighbours had come to wish us happiness, and, to our amazement, were laden with Christmas offerings. It was a most unlooked-for attention ; and, what made it more overpowering, none of them were content with bringing one present—they all brought three or four. It was amusing, the eagerness with which they openly examined and commented on the quality of each other's offerings of tapa, every family bringing at least one roll of that fabric. One bright-eyed, pretty little boy, the son of a neighbouring chief, kept dodging behind his father, unable to conquer his bashfulness and come forward with his gift. At last he screwed his courage to the sticking-place, and, smiling shyly, he advanced and, taking my hand in his little brown paw, slipped a beautiful inlaid tortoiseshell ring on to my finger. Then, dashing outside, he instantly returned with a fine

mat, which he presented to Tamaitai. This was not the ordinary kind of fine mat, but made of a species of nettle plant. It would almost pass for fur, it is so shaggy and flossy on one side, and very pretty. Other small children brought presents of palusame, pine-apples, crayfish, and strings of red seeds. When we made any little offering in return, they always placed it on their heads while saying, 'Fa fiti lava,' as that action is supposed to be the height of courtesy and respect.

Later in the afternoon a group of very pleasant-looking natives, who had evidently come from a distance, strolled up, whom Tuvala announced were his 'fathers'; and, sure enough, they were laden with tapas, baskets, necklaces, and fans. We were not quite sure what strict etiquette demanded of us on this occasion; but Tuvala, who was very proud to show off his accomplishments, opened innumerable tins, and prepared quite a feast, which was much appreciated. It was an interesting and delightful afternoon, and when about eight o'clock the last of our guests took their departure, they

left our room a veritable museum of curios and souvenirs of the South Seas.

The following morning (Christmas Day) the horses were brought round, and we rode away in the early dawn to be present at six-o'clock Mass in the Catholic Cathedral on the beach. It was an exquisite morning. The white, fleecy clouds which crowned the mountains gradually dissolved, and a rosy light crept up the horizon, causing the deep blue overhead to fade to turquoise, and then the sun blazed in sight. Every leaf and blade of grass was glittering with dew, the great feathery branched palms on the mountains above gleaming like polished silver, and those nearer sparkling in the golden light as if they were powdered with diamonds; and always, as the sun rose higher and the heat increased, the brilliant-hued birds and butterflies crossed our track. As we passed native houses a few sleepy Samoans, holding some slight drapery round them, would call out Christmas greeting, and disappear behind their mat curtains. A sudden turn brought us upon a number of small brown infants

who were playing together in a stately manner. They were innocent of clothing, and evidently had been enjoying bread-fruit and banana galore, they appeared so sleek and well nurtured, and were palpably more at ease without garments. At the farther end of a straight part of the path a horse was grazing, with its rope attached to a weird-looking heap in the middle of the way. On our approach the uncanny little object turned out to be a small boy, fast asleep, and rolled up in a lava-lava. Awaking with a start, he darted out of his covering and scampered towards the hut; but on looking round, and noticing our innocent demeanour, rushed back, seized his drapery, held it between himself and the strangers, and smilingly greeted us as 'Great white ladies!' to which we replied 'Talofa, Alii!' (Good day to your highness!), at which the little fellow collapsed with delight and amusement.

Arriving at the gates of the Cathedral, we met groups of natives, all in their gayest attire, and on entering a wonderful spectacle presented itself. The

great building was one mass of brilliant colouring, and completely filled in every corner with human beings. The beautiful decorations were very unlike what is generally associated with Christmas in our Northern minds, the walls and columns being almost completely covered with scarlet and cream-coloured hibiscus blossom, yellow allamandas, and ropes of jessamine and moss. From the ceiling were suspended innumerable devices, executed in many-coloured strips of thin bark, pink and cream being the predominating colours. Then the vast mass of humanity, many clad in native tapa, the colour of which harmonises so pleasantly with their polished brown skins ; several of the women decked out in gaudy calicoes and velveteens—introduced by the traders—purple, sky-blue, green, and red. And then, conspicuous amidst this kaleidoscopic throng, were the chiefs of the surrounding villages in their pure white lava-lavas.

Thank Heaven ! the Samoans have not yet adopted European dress, and the atrocious velveteens can be pardoned on account of the quaint

and picturesque cut to which they are subjected. A favourite dress for grand occasions is a many-coloured cotton lava-lava and a strip of velveteen worn tabardwise—that is, a hole cut in the middle, through which the head comes, and a straight piece hangs down back and front; or another way, instead of a tabard, is to wear a tiny sleeveless bodice to the waist. Both of these modes, however, are very civilised, and not so suitable or becoming as a lava-lava of tapa, and garlands of flowers or berries round the shoulders. It was an impressive sight, the intense earnestness of those islanders reverently attending the Mass. There was no half-heartedness; they all joined in the function with right good will.

When it was over, and everyone flocked out into the blazing sunshine, the good Sisters and the Mother Superior from the Convent of Savalalo were surrounded by smiling natives, and all greeting each other with happy ‘Kilisimasi’ wishes. After exchanging many cordialities we found our horses and rode off towards the mountains—this

time to the house of Lau Lii, a charming and accomplished Samoan lady, who is married to a Canadian, and owns a stretch of land on either side of the river which flows past her house. This was a delightful place to visit, and Lau Lii was a vivacious and fascinating hostess, and always made her friends heartily welcome to the use of her bathing-house and the great pool in the river at the foot of her garden. This lady had spent five years in different parts of the United States and Canada with her husband, who was immensely proud of his wife's cleverness, popularity, and good-looks. She spoke English well, and had written a very creditable little history of her native islands. Her part of the river was certainly an ideal spot for a swim, as the great trees sheltered the water in many places from the sun's scorching rays. Strict privacy is never encouraged while bathing in Samoa, and this Christmas morning proved no exception to the rule. As soon as we arrived all Lau Lii's cousins and nieces, who happened to be visiting her, came rushing down from the house, and in a minute had

shaken off their pretty holiday dresses, and wound bright-coloured lava-lavas round their bodies with such cunning and art that, no matter how strongly the river might be running, or in what vicissitudes they might find themselves, the utmost decorum and propriety were maintained. Soon the fun began, the pretty, bright-eyed, brown-skinned girls climbing up on the branch of a huge tree, and turning somersaults, one after another, into the deep, rushing water below. They precipitated themselves into the water every way, except head foremost; with which method they were enchanted, and asked us again and again to repeat our diving. And they worked hard trying to do likewise, but always turned a somersault or made some gyration infinitely more difficult in their efforts to take an ordinary dive. There was great laughter and merrymaking at these water-parties: sometimes one would catch a large prawn, and pursue another in the water, holding up the monster, with its great antennæ stretching out eight inches or more. This morning Lau Lii suggested we should try who

could sit longest at the bottom of the river. None of us could stay down at all. Then our hostess disappeared below. When the water cleared we could see her calmly sitting on the shingle, and twisting her masses of black, curling hair on to the top of her head. It seemed an age to us spectators before she rose and came smiling to the surface, not the least disturbed or out of breath ; and when asked how she did it, answered :

‘ Oh ! I just put big stone in my lap.’

After this exploit we adjourned for breakfast, which was served on the verandah. Lau Lii’s Christmas presents, of which there were a goodly supply, were all laid out ; and besides many native dishes were two plum-puddings, which had been sent to her by friends in the States. So, in the far-away Pacific, if we spent the early morning among dew-spangled palms, in a flower-strewn church, and later in a river where it was advisable to keep out of the sun, here, at least, was genuine plum-pudding to bring us nearer to our frost-bound Northern home ! It was a delightful morning and forenoon

and one not likely to be forgotten by us in the years to come.

Soon we had to proceed to Vailima to help to dress a large Christmas-tree which Mr. Stevenson had had erected in the new dark-panelled hall. The natives were supposed to know nothing of the preparations, and the whole thing was expected to be a joyful surprise to them. Tuvale wept so bitterly at the idea of being left behind again that he had to be taken too. So Mafulu was to look after the kitten, the house was locked up, and away we went.

Everyone was very busy all day fixing on the little candles and presents. Suspended from the ceiling at the top of the tree was a good-sized pink Cupid; and, besides all the ornaments and presents hung on the branches, innumerable things were piled round the stem on the ground. At last it was dark, the tree was lit up, the doors thrown open, and the Vailima servants, their relations and friends, trooped in, and seated themselves cross-legged on the floor round the tree. They were all present

with the exception of the cook, Talolo, and his wife, who were great characters, and generally first in the field when any merrymaking was going on. Sosimo announced they were 'dressing,' but would be ready immediately. We were a little surprised, for hitherto their toilettes had never occupied more than a few seconds. At last they made their appearance, Talolo clad in a chief's dress, pure white from top to toe, and Sina, his wife, in a very beautiful white 'holoku,' and many flowers and ornaments strung about her. They had only that day received the news that, owing to the death of an uncle, Talolo was now the head of his family and a most important person in his village. He was a handsome and extremely intelligent young fellow, and had worked hard learning English while at Vailima. His wife, Sina, was a beautiful girl of about fifteen ; and the quiet dignity with which they took upon themselves the responsibilities of their position was truly edifying. But their new honours did not bring unalloyed happiness to the household, for Talolo was an excellent cook, and now he would

have to leave, to take up his abode and enter upon his duties among his own people.

Among the guests were Fono, the chief of Tanungamanono, and his wife and children. He was a most courteous and amiable man, and devoted to his wife and pretty little children, and it was interesting to look at him now, as simple and juvenile in his delight with the Christmas-tree as his youngest son—and to remember that during the war a few years ago there was not a more daring or valiant warrior in the army. Once he had come into the presence of his king with the head of an enemy he had just slain carried by the hair, which he gripped between his teeth, that mode of bringing a trophy to the sovereign being the acme of Samoan etiquette.

Politeness prevented the better-bred from showing the least surprise or enthusiasm ; but Misifolo, Sao, Iopo, and a few of the boys who worked outside, were considerably impressed with the magnificence, and sat round-eyed and open-mouthed. Then, as the presents began to be distributed, the Steven-

sons stood by enjoying the happy looks on the guests' faces, and as each Samoan stepped forward to receive his or her Christmas gifts, Tusitala had kind and gracious words for all. There were bright-coloured blazers for the house-boys, which they immediately donned, and flageolets, picture-books, fancy note-paper, and umbrellas for the others—the latter being much appreciated, as Samoans have a great objection to rain touching their heads. It may pour over their bodies, but generally they spare no pains to keep it off their heads, and through the civilising (?) influence of the trader they have found that the banana-leaf is quite superseded by the umbrella. Then there were all kinds of ornaments, pretty garments, and work-boxes for the girls, with which they undemonstratively signified their satisfaction with a 'faa fiti lava.' And it was amusing to see the intense eagerness with which they scrutinised each other's gifts, to the neglect of their own. At last, when the tree was stripped bare of its gay hangings, there was quite a clamour for the Cupid still poised above

the topmost branch ; indeed, it appeared to be the success of the entertainment, and was assigned to the cook's mother, a handsome woman, who was about to take unto herself another husband.

It was characteristic of our host, when the popularity of the pink Cupid was established, to remark : ' Now, look here ; let us remember to have Cupids to go all round among our people next Christmas.'

CHAPTER V

TAPOS AND OTHER 'FAFINES'

IN each village there is always a tapo, or chief maiden. She is sometimes the local chief's daughter, but often merely a damsel of good family. Frequently she is chosen for the position when a mere baby, and remains tapo for years, or till she is married. The hunchbacks and dwarfs are the acknowledged guardians of this maiden, and they generally have their hands full and their time thoroughly occupied in watching over her. A distinguished ex-tapo of our acquaintance was married to a New Zealander who had settled in Samoa, and she gave me many amusing details of the experiences of her girlhood. The dwarfs never allowed her out of their sight; and in the long run it was better that they should always be with her,

for though she was one of the sweetest-tempered and most amiable girls imaginable, her exalted position caused her to have many enemies, and was apt to raise much jealousy in the hearts of the less magnanimous among her companions. Then the mothers of other eligible virgins were continually on the watch to try to discover something to the disadvantage of the tapo of the time, and if witnesses in the shape of dwarfs were not there to swear to the contrary, and to the truth of the tapo, these mothers of rival 'fafines' (girls) would have thought nothing of concocting shocking stories, and repeating them to the whole village, in the hope that the present tapo might be deposed, and supplanted by one of their own daughters. After recounting the tragic *dénouement* to the short-lived independence of certain foolish virgins who, fretting under the perpetual watchfulness of the dwarfs, had been skilful enough to give them the slip on sundry occasions, with very fatal results to themselves, my friend explained that she took care never to stir without her attendant familiars, and she had been so used to them since her

earliest childhood that they never troubled her ; besides, she added, they were such little things they did not count. So evidently the village life of the tapo was not a bed of roses ; but it was such an honourable position they preferred usually to bear all the rubs and tiresome restrictions in order to retain the enviable distinction.

In time of war it is the tapo's duty to lead on to combat the warriors of her village, and she is often in the thick of the skirmishing ; but should she be wounded or killed, it is a pure accident, as the Samoans have the greatest horror of hurting a woman in any way, and would not even injure their enemy's tapo. There is a story told of how, during the war that was carried on in Upolu for a considerable time five or six years ago, two armies had met and were drawn up, blazing into each other's lines, when a native woman appeared with a cow she wished to place in safety. The entire firing was immediately suspended on both sides till she and her charge had crossed the lines and were completely out of all harm's way. The women could

rely so thoroughly on the gallantry of their countrymen that they had no fear during the fighting, and would take food to their husbands and brothers at any time, and pass through the ranks of the warriors of the belligerent army with perfect impunity; as long as the daylight lasted and they could be easily seen they were quite safe.

On all *fête* days the tapo, dressed in the finest of mats or specially patterned bark cloth, and with garlands of flowers round her neck and waist, was well to the fore in all sports and ceremonies, and at a Mai or Talolo she led her village with no little grace and distinction. She was generally a handsome, well-grown young woman, though occasionally a tiny child might be seen leading on the warriors. The Mai is a ceremony which has been instituted by the missionaries, when the natives, dressed in their best holiday attire, troop down from the mountains and villages far and near, bringing with them presents of pigs, bananas, egg-fruit, and every kind of native food. The missionaries address the assembled multitude in the large wooden hall on

the beach, which is used for every kind of local function, and then the food is all divided, and every one eats his or her fill. Many of the youths and children surpass themselves in this exercise, their capacity for disposing of pig, taro, and bread-fruit being prodigious. During the month of November a Mai was held, and all day long crowds of natives from remote settlements thronged the beach and umbrageous pathways which lead down to the shore. They were all courteous and amiable, but very anxious to get a good stare at the white strangers, if they could manage it surreptitiously and without rudeness.

The blinding blue of the sky overhead, and the intense green of the tropical surroundings, threw into strong relief the brilliant colouring of the natives : their bronze skins, well rubbed with cocoa-nut oil and glossy as a well-groomed chestnut thoroughbred ; many of the dandies and belles with their hair dyed to a ruddy gold sometimes matching their bodies in tone ; and, still harmonising with their skins, strips of tawny-coloured bark cloth round their waists,

while in their hair and round their necks were garlands of green moss or red berries and many-hued flowers. It was delightful to see three or four young dudes lounging along by some clump of flowering shrubs. They slowly twirled the clubs or staffs they happened to be carrying, and with languorous affectation they would reach up and pluck a velvety trumpet flower, which they placed in their nimbus of ruddy hair or behind an ear, the hair being so stiff with the amount of lime used that it easily held any ornament stuck in it. There were a great number of tapos, who, as a rule, kept apart from the groups of villagers; and many had their dwarfs following them. Some of them were beautiful girls, with fair, honey-coloured skins, and, judging from appearances, well deserved the position they held. Some were not so pretty, and a few, possibly greatly admired specimens, were enormously fat. They all looked extremely important and self-conscious; two or three of them tossed their heads and strode about in a delightfully haughty manner when anyone chanced to look at

them. One girl especially interested us. She was a plump little person to begin with, but, being the daughter of a very powerful chief, she possessed an enormous dower in the shape of fine mats, and on this occasion she had evidently put them all on. Mat after mat had been wound round her, until they stuck out in an assertive and comical manner. She wore a large head-dress of dyed yellow hair with a mirror fixed in front of it, and many strings of teeth, shells, and flowers about her body. A diminutive hunchback, carrying her fly-flapper, followed her wherever she went. She disdained to speak to anyone, however, but strutted up and down, simply bristling with mats and vanity. Others were pert little minxes, and were amusingly condescending to their friends and relatives ; but when it came to the feast all the innocent little airs and graces were laid aside, and the saucy tapo enjoyed her pig and yams as naturally as the hungriest boy there.

Every village of any standing at all has its talking-men, or men of wisdom, who settle affairs, and whose permission it is necessary to obtain

before a native can undertake certain responsibilities. They have a great deal to say in connection with the tapo, and expect implicit obedience from her. Their permission is required in order to allow her to marry anyone, and they often absolutely refuse to consent to her wedding the youth of her choice, but arrange an alliance for her with some neighbouring chief whose political views or whose retinue of followers might ensure his proving a useful ally in time of war. Sometimes there was great excitement in a village if the tapo took the matter into her own hands and defied these meddling old busybodies, running away with her sweetheart, and eluding their vigilance. In other cases, where the talking-men were very powerful, the poor tapo simply disappeared, and then it was known that they had caused her to be carried away into the forest, to a retreat, the locality of which was known only to themselves; and there she had to remain till she consented to bend to their autocratic wills. In some cases the tapo never returned. The relations did not seem to mind very much. It was

the custom. Besides, with a philosophic economy of time and trouble, they speedily justified the apathy they displayed in the matter by the reflection that from time immemorial the talking-men had always been right.

A little stir was caused while we were there by a wealthy young American who was globe-trotting for his health, and who had become so enraptured with Samoa on viewing the islands from the deck of the mail steamer while *en route* for Auckland, that he changed all his plans, landed at Apia, and took up his abode at the International Hotel, on the beach, where he concluded to remain some time. He quickly picked up the language, and made numerous peregrinations over the island, associating with the natives, among whom he made many friends. While being entertained at a feast at a village some distance away, he met a handsome native girl, whom he settled to make his wife. She was not a tapo, but still a girl of very good family, and considered a great beauty by many. Strange to say, the talking-men of her village flatly

refused to allow her to marry a white man. They had probably some influential chief in their mind's eye as a suitable match for her. When the old men's decision was made known there was a considerable amount of excitement, and for a time the two young people became a centre of interest to their friends and well-wishers. Perhaps the girl might have been compelled to yield to the authority of the local autocrats; but this time she had a business-like American for a champion, not an indolent Samoan. The talking-men were non-plussed by the lack of ceremony bestowed on them. It was altogether out of their reckoning that anything would be done before they had held many village meetings and uttered numerous and elaborate threats. The complete silence threw them off their guard, so there was no one to hinder him when the American rode over early one morning to the girl's village, accompanied by a servant with a led horse. He quickly mounted his sweetheart upon it, who had been expecting him, and rode off to a friend's house at a considerable distance, where

she would be comparatively secure from the minions of the talking-men. He then bought a piece of land, and hastened on the building of his house, in order that he might make a home for her at once. When we last saw them he was very happy, and had concluded to leave his bones in Upolu.

When the tiresome old talking-men get their own way, as they nearly always do, and marry their tapo to a suitable young chief, the wedding is a very grand affair. The dowry of the tapo consists of fine mats, and the greater number she possesses, the grander and more distinguished she is. Fine mats are the diamonds, pearls, and orange blossoms of an island bride; and these, along with necklaces of whales' teeth, are the few things they one and all refuse to part with, and the stranger who is lucky and popular enough to win so much love as to be presented with either may consider himself fortunate. One fair bride whom I saw possessed forty-three fine mats. The poor thing wore about two dozen of them during the marriage ceremony, and it was not easy to discover the pretty, slim little lady

among them all; but she had the satisfaction of knowing it was a surpassingly gorgeous wedding, and considered a magnificent spectacle by all the natives who were present. These fine mats are heirlooms in the island families, and are handed down from one generation to another, some of them being of marvellous fineness, and believed to be several hundreds of years old. They are mostly of a yellow, tawny colour, though some of the very old and valuable ones have become grey with age. They are made of a species of pandanus split up very fine, and represent an immense amount of labour on the part of the women whose special vocation it is to keep their family supplied with mats. Often it takes three or four island dames a whole year to complete one mat, and some of the large ones have had as much as three years' work expended on them. They are rarely worn or used for anything, except on very great occasions. The tapu wears one or two on *fête* days, and as many as she can wind round her the day she is married. When a great man dies, his body is wrapped in fine

mats. Otherwise they are not used, but kept folded carefully, and rolled up inside coarser mats; periodically they are taken out, unfolded, and spread in the sun to air, after which they are religiously put away again. The ladies of good family were always in a complete state of exhaustion after a day of mat-airing, the number they possessed necessitated such a lot of folding and unfolding; very old ones especially requiring care, as they are worn quite thin at the creases where they have always been folded from generation to generation. Two or three times, when passing some important Samoan's house, and stopping to exchange greetings with one of the family, a palm curtain was pulled aside, and there was the pretty young mistress of the house, lying on her back, and fanning herself in a listless way. When asked what the matter was, she would answer tragically, with a comical look of woe, 'Oh! talofa, mats—mats all day yesterday—mats all day to-day!'

A young aspirant to the throne, at the time we were in Upolu, caused a slight sensation by divorcing

his wife of a year or two's standing ; that is to say, he returned her to her people with double the quantity of presents in the shape of pigs and bread-fruit that she had brought in her dower to him. It was considered a very satisfactory arrangement on both sides ; for three days her people feasted and made merry over the presents, and she would soon be sought in marriage again, as she was looked upon as a much more important person, now that she had been married to a possible king of the future, than she was as a petty chief's daughter ; and the young man was glad to be rid of her, as he had fallen under the spell of a new love in the shape of a pretty and exceedingly clever girl. This girl, Soenga by name, was a remarkable instance of what civilisation sometimes does for the natives of Pacific islands. She was the daughter of a chief, and was tapu of her village when a tiny child ; but at a very early age she was taken away from her people and placed at the mission school, where she was taught to wear clothes and to read and write, and where she also picked up a smattering

of English. She remained for years among the few white people and the missionaries, and as she grew up adopted the ordinary dress of the white settler. When she went on riding expeditions or to picnics, where she was generally the belle and bright particular wit of the occasion, she wore a skirt and blouse, and was altogether quite civilised in her attire. She continued this mode of dress for a short time after she was grown up, and had returned to live with her father and her people at her old home, where she was expected to introduce European manners and customs and spread the fashion of civilisation in the shape of clothing, and thoroughly redeem her guileless and contented companions from the simplicity of their native lava-lava of tapa and garlands of sweet-scented flowers. However, once there, instead of initiating her friends into the decorative quality of European clothing, as was natural under the circumstances, she began to fret over the awkwardness of the things she had been made to wear, and after much grumbling, to the horror of her former friends, cast them

all off, vowed she would never put on papilane garments again, that she was done with them for ever, and adopted an almost ultra-simplicity of native costume. After the civilised atmosphere in which she had been reared and clad, it must not be thought that it was dulness or laziness that made her return to her original way of life. The native Samoan in her, and the exigencies of the climate, were simply more forcible and strong than the clothing and example of the white man ; for Soenga was one of the brightest and cleverest girls in the island ; her intelligence and quickness of perception were far above the average, and it would be difficult to find a more amusing and entertaining companion. And this was the maiden that the young Alii Tamasese was about to make his wife. Truly an interesting and original couple !

Samoans have the greatest dislike to a man or woman, especially the latter, who is not of good family. One time, at Vailima, everything seemed to go wrong : the boys, and the wives of two of them who were married, did nothing but weep at intervals all day long. The food was placed upon the table in an

uneatable condition, and the weeds were allowed to spring up in the garden and plantation unhindered by the outdoor boys. This state of things continued for three days, and nothing that anyone said to them had any effect. At last Tusitala insisted on an explanation, and a small deputation came from the kitchen region, and, with many sobs and interjections, said it was all owing to the presence of the new laundress who had come to stay at Vailima. When asked what it was she had done to offend them, they admitted they had absolutely nothing against her, except that she was not of good family, and it was impossible for them to do any work when a person who was not of irreproachable parentage lived there.

'It was very sad, for she was a good laundress,' remarked Tusitala; 'but when we spoke to her on the subject, she admitted she was not of good family, and quite agreed that she would have to go. When the gate had closed after her the boys and girls dried their eyes, the dinner was served neither raw nor burnt, and smiles and good-humour reigned supreme.'

CHAPTER VI

ISLAND BOYS

It is strange that the Samoans, who appear such an intelligent race of people, should be destitute of literature of any kind ; and even their traditional records are vague and unreliable. Everything in their minds dates from the last important event that occurred in the island, and the things that happened before that are quickly forgotten. The matters of lesser importance are always dated from the new moon, or the last steamer that called at the island. The arrival of a man-of-war always marks a new era for the inhabitants ; but sometimes in the course of a few weeks cruisers representing England, Germany, and the United States visit Apia, and by the greater number of the natives the three ships are just designated 'Man o wal,' and

soon in their simple minds get rolled into one. Their thirst for news of any kind is very great, and they are all confirmed gossips ; any information or scandal is quickly discussed, and repeated in so many different ways that in the course of a few hours the simple rumour, which perhaps had little or no foundation, has become a series of exciting events. Give a Samoan the merest clue upon which to build an exciting yarn, and he never loses his opportunity. The better-bred are always perfectly idle people ; there is no necessity for them to work, and they even take their amusements in an indolent, leisurely fashion. There are no wild animals to afford sport, unless they hunted the pigs that run off into the bush and become wild and savage ; but even the excitement of that pastime would not compensate the Samoan for the trouble he would be put to in order to cut a way through the great liana-hung trees in the mountain forests. Paddling about in their little outrigger canoes inside the coral reefs, and spearing fish in the shallows, is pleasant enough for a time ; but it soon palls, and

a great deal of the fish-catching is left to the boys and girls. A considerable amount of time can be spent over a feast, or even an isolated pig. But roast pig and miti sauce are not everyday luxuries, so the principal part of a Samoan's life is spent in talking—indeed, they are quite 'Athenian' in their eagerness to meet to discuss the news of the day, and especially the local politics. Most of the men of good family are rabid politicians, and they never tire of expounding their views on the momentous questions of the time.

Throughout all the Pacific islands the native who dwells on 'the beach'—*i.e.* the settlement of houses where the white men and half-castes have their stores, and where the ships touch—is inferior, and is never to be taken as a type of the inhabitants. His unsophisticated nature quickly picks up all the vices and bad elements in the personality of the new-comer. The good characteristics are perhaps less easy to discover; but, as a rule, the South Sea island trader is anything but a worthy example for the simple-minded Kanaka, and, with very few

exceptions, he is the usual specimen of the white man that natives of remote islands come in contact with. Hence travellers on board the American mail boat who come ashore for an hour or two see nothing of the real Samoan ; they stroll along the beach, past the row of straggling stores and bars, and buy a few fans and clubs, specially made for the mail-boat passengers. Then, as the atmosphere feels hot after the breezes at sea, they usually adjourn to the verandah of the wooden hotel, where they have lemon squashes and gin slings brought to them by Solomon Island black boys. After which they return to the boat with a poor impression of the courtesy of the native, and perhaps disappointed with his lack of picturesque dress, as many of the Samoans who live on the beach attempt to clothe themselves with a European motive running through their dress. But leave the beach, and in half an hour one is among an almost different race, so strong is the contrast between the beach-man and the ordinary native. Still, the best Samoans sometimes stroll down to the beach to hear the

news, and groups varying from ten to twenty men may be seen seated under a wide-spreading candle-nut or banyan tree, and discussing politics or the news brought by some trading schooner from other islands.

A Samoan usually begins the day by having a swim in the sea or river, whichever happens to be nearest to his house, and then, after a good feed of bread-fruit and taro, he sallies forth to pay a round of visits and dally away the day. Though full of good-feeling and kindness, these morning calls of the aristocratic islander often end by causing the greatest commotion and consternation. One day a great scare ran through Upolu, stirring us up to a tremendous pitch of excitement, and in the end it was found to be entirely due to a morning call. It happened like this. In the morning three young dandies, Iopo, Sau, and Cielasengo, belonging to Laulii, after having got themselves up regardless of time or trouble, set forth to pay visits. Greeting friends as they passed along, they made their way to the chief house of the next village, where they

were made welcome, the kava was passed round, and the news of the day discussed. In the course of conversation Cielasengo casually remarked that it was some time since a native had been seen with a blackened face. (It is the custom for Samoans to rub charcoal over their faces at war-time, and a group of natives who have their faces blackened mean to lose no chance of any scrimmage that may be going.) At his friend's succinct observation Iopo wagged his head, and said, with a look of profound knowledge, that he would not be surprised to see blackened faces before long. Acquaintances who happened to be passing on their way to pay visits farther along the coast hastened forward with renewed vigour, and burst upon the credulous villagers with thrilling news to the effect that they had heard from friends that hundreds of blackened faces were expected there the following day. Farther on round the coast the news was spread, and soon many people were able to give a list of the villages which had taken up arms, and were at the present moment marching on Apia ; by sunset

half the island was in a commotion, and the account of the bloodshed was horrible and complete. And little observations like that of Iopo's were the cause of the many rumours of war in Samoa which from time to time have made white people anxious about their friends there.

One evening, as Tamaitai and I returned from a short visit to Vailima, we were welcomed with unusual joy by Mafulu and Tuvale; they were almost inarticulate with excitement, and it was only after both of them had been simultaneously attempting to speak and wildly gesticulate for some time that we gathered that their uneasiness was caused by natives who had been passing the house all day and dropping hints of the terrible atrocities that were being perpetrated on the beach. We had heard so many of these reports that we slightly hurt our good retainers' feelings by doubting this one, so to pacify them both we got out a brace of revolvers which we happened to have with us, and let them see that we were prepared for an emergency. The sight of the firearms comforted them

wonderfully, and they took up their abode for the night in the harness-room, preferring that to their own 'fale' across the clearing. The latest news which we heard that night before going to bed was to the effect that eight hundred men had taken possession of Apia, locked up the Chief Justice and President, and murdered many of the storekeepers. Next morning, after an early breakfast, we set off to Apia, and on arriving there found that no one had heard of the terrible massacre; a few young men with blackened faces had swaggered up and down, but their calumet of war did not go beyond a good deal of bombast and big talking. The Chief Justice and President were each calmly smoking on their verandahs, and the storekeepers were busy doing trade with the peaceful islanders, and between transactions availing themselves of the opportunity to hop into an adjacent bar for a cocktail or glass of lager, according to their nationality. The only real excitement on the previous night had been caused by a half caste who, unfortunately, had suffered from the heat of the climate after several

pick-me-ups, and had to be removed till the effects had worn off.

Shortly after this a man-of-war that had been expected to arrive from the Sandwich Islands at a certain time did not make her appearance : people began to talk, and twenty-four hours after the time she was considered due our neighbours brought the thrilling news that she had been wrecked ; some pieces of the ship had been washed ashore, but all hands were supposed to have been lost, as a few bodies had been picked up off Tutuila. It was such a very circumstantial account this time that we were almost inclined to believe it to be true. However, our fears were soon set at rest, for two days later our eyes were gladdened by the sight of our beloved white ensign fluttering at the stern of the British cruiser as she lazily swung round her anchor in Apia Bay. The captain laughed when he heard the yarn of the wreck, for they had experienced singularly peaceful weather ; only Honolulu had proved very fascinating, and as something on board the ship wanted overhauling,

they were glad to be able to prolong their visit there several days.

These few examples will give some idea of the fertile imagination and excited fancy of the Samoan's mind. In an island where all the news is spread by word of mouth, how easy it is to circulate tales 'of most disastrous chances, Of moving accidents by flood and field,' which are so circumstantially delivered that one is bound to believe at least one-third of them !

When the young men of these islands are between the ages of fifteen and seventeen, if they have the remotest pretension to good family, a prerogative to which few are not entitled, they have to be tattooed—an operation they are proud to undergo, as the result stamps the youth with the hall-mark of a certain amount of importance, and any islander who is not tattooed is looked down upon by the natives, and quite ostracised by those who have undergone the rite. The youths generally go two or three at a time to the professional tattooist, and the process sometimes lasts many

months, at the end of which time they emerge from retirement and burst upon society in all the pride of their new estate ; for when a man has been tattooed he is supposed to have come to years of discretion, his boyhood has been left behind, he takes his place among the politicians, and is qualified to discuss the most advanced matters with the wise men of his village. He may also, if he is so minded, take unto himself a wife. Though the tattooing may vary a little in design, the decoration is always in the shape of knee-breeches, extending from the waist—where strings tied in knots and other ornamental fastenings are tattooed on the skin—so thorough is the artist in his work—to below the knee. The pattern is very elaborate, with stripes of natural skin intersecting. It is certainly a great improvement to their appearance, for in wet or stormy weather they economically leave their best lava-lavas at home, and wear only a banana-leaf or a girdle of leaves ; and should an islander be caught in a heavy shower of rain while wearing only a garment of tapa, the tattooing stands

him in good stead, for bark-cloth does not survive wet, and rapidly dissolves into rags. No matter how scantily they may be clad, the tattooing makes them look thoroughly clothed and trim in their appearance. After leaving the Navigators and visiting other islands, where the art is only used in the most inartistic and disfiguring manner, we missed the clean-looking tattooed natives of Samoa in their decorous knee-breeches.

Mr. Stevenson had the greatest horror of the native men wearing European dress. The troop of 'boys' at Vailima perhaps wondered sometimes what had become of their master's old clothes, for many of the white men on the beach gave their cast-off garments to their servants. The house-boys at Vailima might wear shirts and jackets if they liked, but the rest of their costume had to be a lava-lava. Mr. Stevenson would hear of nothing else; and he was wise, for often when they take to European dress their lungs become affected, as they have no idea of guarding against cold. Should they get wet, it is very easy to change their

lava-lava; but European clothes are much too elaborate for a Samoan to trouble to take off simply because they happen to be damp, whereas the rain runs off their well-oiled bodies, doing them no harm.

While we were staying at Vailima one of the periodical expeditions had to be organised to bury Tusitala's old clothes. He was afraid the boys who worked on the plantation would discover and wear the things, and he found that the only way to effectually conceal them. No one who has not lived among brown islanders can conceive how difficult it is to act secretively with regard to them. They instinctively seem to feel in the air that there is a plot to conceal something from them, and they take it in turns never to allow one out of their sight. Many fruitless attempts were made to get away from the house with the condemned garments; it was no use, they frustrated our efforts on all occasions. A guileless-looking native always appeared out of the jungle just as we thought we were clear of them, and it was impossible to do anything,

for if they once suspected that treasure of any kind was buried in the forest, they would have taken pains to go and dig it up again. Once Mr. Stevenson concocted a most elaborate plan, and at last we thought our efforts were to be crowned with success. Three of us left the house at different times and strolled in opposite directions ; then by a cunning manœuvre we met in a glade in the forest in about half an hour's time, and were just about to dig a hole, rejoicing at the result of our stratagem, when the lianas and undergrowth parted, and the smiling faces of Sosimo, Micaele, and Misifolo beamed upon us. Mechanically we all began to take an exaggerated interest in the orchids that grew luxuriantly on the trunks of the trees, and as we sadly retraced our steps, the boys insisted on rooting up and carrying home armfuls of beautiful orchids, which would perish in an hour's time, and the compromising bundle of clothes. After several days of excitement and anxiety, including many adventures, we at last managed to elude the vigilance of our tormentors, and with

much subtlety succeeded in burying unseen the haunting papilane garments.

Most of the boys at Vailima took a good deal of pride in their personal appearance, and loved to array themselves in any scraps of white man's finery they could find. Mrs. Louis Stevenson was very kind to them all, and imported some delightfully gaudy blazers for the special delectation of the house-boys. They were enchanted with the gifts, and when they had dressed themselves in their very best—*i.e.* a white linen shirt (some enviable dandies possessed one with a stiff front), a Stuart tartan lava-lava, and a sky-blue and purple striped blazer, their hair combed straight up on end with a few flowers stuck in it, presenting admirable types of brown mashers—they came separately and begged a few hours' leave to go and visit their relations and show off their new clothes. The worst of it was that their friends often took a fancy to the smart garments and kept them; for nothing that a Samoan has belongs to him any more than to his relations, and if they should covet any of his posses-

sions, be it the clothes off his back or the money he has worked for, he has to give it up without a murmur if they desire to have it. Perhaps that is why it is so difficult to get a Samoan to come and work at all, for the family who live at home and do nothing, as a rule appropriate all the gains of the more energetic member of the household. However, they are capricious creatures, and I never knew anyone in Samoa who was able to keep boys more than a few months, except Mr. Stevenson; some of his had remained at Vailima for considerably over a year, and still they showed no inclination to leave. Certainly they were mightily well off, and probably they had sense enough to know it. Samoan boys have a very easy way of taking leave of their masters. One day they will ask leave to go and pay some calls, and they simply do not return again; and often they behave thus only a day or two before their month's wages become due.

Samoan etiquette compels a native to make a gift of anything he possesses should his friend or neighbour wish to have it for his own. When we

first went to live on the slope of the mountain, and visited among our neighbours, we were often embarrassed with the kindness with which they insisted on our taking away with us any pretty things they happened to have lying about the house, or even parts of their dresses. We soon found that we had not even to look interestedly at anything, or the object in question was ours. It was no use refusing : by the time we reached home, or early the following morning, the presents were lying on the verandah at our door. One would imagine that this courtesy might become a little strained when it came to serious things, but that was not the case. If anyone who was of good family desired to adopt a friend's child, the child was called, and told to go away with its new father and be good ! It seemed to be a Samoan's greatest joy to be able to adopt children ; almost every family did so, and in a very short time they quite forgot which were their own children and which those of adoption, and they all grew up in harmony together. They were very fond of adding to their number of relatives in other ways, too :

men often swore to be brothers or girls to be sisters, and they quite believed that they were real connections then, and were genuinely devoted to each other.

When Mrs. Stevenson (Louis Stevenson's mother) left Vailima to pay a flying visit to Scotland, she left a number of her dresses, hats, and caps, which we were to get rid of at our leisure. They were forgotten the day she sailed, and in the evening two strangers who had landed by the steamer that took Mrs. Stevenson away were expected to dinner. We were all grouped suitably on the verandah to give the strangers a pleasant welcome, the house-boys in their Stuart tartan lava-lavas making a picturesque background for our white clothes. As the sun began to sink behind the palm-trees, the two Americans emerged from the forest and trotted towards us across the lawn ; in a minute four outdoor boys had sprung from seemingly nowhere, to take their horses. For a moment we were all speechless with consternation ; but instantly the entire dignity of the reception was at an end,

and guests and hosts alike were convulsed with laughter. This commotion was caused by Misifolo, an exceedingly tall, lean youth with haggard, melancholy face. He was clad in a very rudimentary sky-blue jacket and a small lava-lava round his waist; but he had been rummaging among Mrs. Stevenson's things, and was now crowned by a voluminous widow's cap, the long ends of which floated on the breeze. Sao, another of the boys, a fat, well-nurtured youth, dressed solely in a strip of tapa, had found his way to the same heap of treasures, and had unearthed therefrom a large broad-brimmed mushroom-shaped hat, which he had tied with ribbons under his chin in a maidenly manner. Misifolo regarded his find with the greatest respect, and for a long time kept it concealed in his room, lest any of the other boys should take it from him. At last his fears had to succumb to his vanity, which no longer would allow him to hide his latest addition to European dress, and one day Misifolo was seen gravely weeding in the vegetable garden clothed in the precious cap, which every minute

appeared above the bushes as he tore up the weeds. Alas! his frolics and masqueradings in English habiliments were stopped in a peremptory manner, for influenza broke out and ran like quicksilver through the island. Whole families lay prostrate within its clutches, and many of the white folk, whom this attack did not seem to affect, were busy morning, noon, and night, trying to help the poor natives; for Samoans, the instant they are taken ill, make up their minds to die, and nothing will shake the belief in them that the arch-steward of men's entailed estate is striding towards them. One boy after another at Vailima went down before the disease, and Mrs. Stevenson had them brought over from their outdoor fales and placed on mattresses in the large hall of the house, where she could look after them better, and help them towards convalescence. In two days all of them were lying in the improvised hospital with the exception of Sao—the Bull of Bashan, we called him, on account of his greatness of strength and power of lung. He was nervous, but put a bold face on the matter and

tried to look bright and unconcerned, assuring us that 'great was the power of God' in him, and he was not afraid. The third day he was not looking well, and though he still reiterated 'Kel e le poule,' it lacked conviction and did not come from the heart; however, he continued to skip—he was always a light-hearted soul—when he was taken notice of, and rooted up a young tree to show that his strength had not abated; but by evening our last native helping-hand had gone, and poor Sao was lying prostrate with the rest.

They were the most difficult patients imaginable to try to nurse. They lay and moaned, and refused to take anything to cure them, insisting that they were dying, and the powers were too strong for poor islanders to fight against them. The innocent Bull of Bashan wept, and murmured that he had believed in the 'poule,' and now that the 'poule' had deserted him there was no hope whatever. Notwithstanding their gloomy premonitions, in a few days the worst seemed past, and just as we were all congratulating ourselves that the poor

fellows had taken a turn for the better, some friends from Taunamunaou arrived to visit them, and while left alone with the invalids fed them on bananas, bread-fruit, and palusame, the very worst things they could have eaten in that climate during such an illness; the consequence was several of the boys next day had a relapse and were delirious. But if illnesses in the tropics are violent, they are also rapid. One finds oneself suddenly very ill, and soon is surprised to feel nearly well again; an illness that would take weeks to shake off in England is got rid of in as many days in an island of sunshine and warmth. And so it was with the Samoans, and at last the kind Stevensons thought their efforts were to be rewarded by the speedy convalescence of their retainers. But again their hopes were frustrated, for just as they were on the high-road to recovery, and had been promised they should be allowed to get up the following day, they took the matter into their own hands, and we despaired of ever being able to pull them through again. Early in the morning they had

wakened and felt a little feverish with the heat of the blankets, so Misifolo suggested that a bathe in the river in the cool of the morning before the sun was up was all they required now to make them quite strong. Owing to their innate love of the water, this suggestion was hailed with enthusiasm and acted upon unanimously. They flung aside their blankets, and with the utmost stealth crept out of the house, and, keeping well in the shadow of the trees, reached the river in safety, enjoyed a nice cold bathe, and then, when they were feebly tottering back to the house in the last stages of exhaustion, and feeling that the 'cure' had not worked quite in the way they had expected, they were discovered by the household, who were aghast at the suicidal course they had taken, and, hurrying them back to their blankets, administered such restoratives as were deemed fittest under the circumstances. The boys were very frightened at the turn for the worse that set in, and fairly gave themselves up for lost. Fortunately, this time they were amenable to reason, and in a day or two it was a relief to see most of

them prowling about, even though they looked like ghosts of their former selves. Some of them were very grateful for all the kindness that had been lavished on them during their illness, and wished to return to their work whenever they were able to stand on their feet ; but this Mrs. Stevenson would not allow, and they were made to rest, and cheerily told to go and play on their pipes and flageolets—a pastime they loved. It was a quaint style of convalescence, but appeared suitable for the boys, for after a day or two of peaceful sylvan sounds very suggestive of the Arcadia of old, as they strolled up and down or sat piping under the spreading fua-fua trees, they were quite recovered, and able to begin their duties again.

It was very sad to see the numbers of families who were laid low with the epidemic. While riding along the coast or passing through a village sometimes not a creature was to be seen ; all the houses had their curtains of plaited palm-leaves let down, and it might have passed for a settlement of the dead, everything appeared so deserted and for-

lorn ; but on lifting one of the curtains there might be seen from eight to fifteen people lying on mats, rolled up in any pieces of material they possessed, a bath-towel being a favourite wrap, and moaning piteously with the aches in their heads and limbs.

At that time we were living at Vailima, and as we had shut up the cottage, Tuvala had gone home to his people, to take up his old life and leave the pomps and eccentricities of the white man behind him. One day we made up a little party and rode along to his village past Fangalii, Vailele, and Getongo Point ; and here, too, all the inhabitants were suffering from influenza—the islands are very united in their ailments, and generally take their illnesses in battalions. Tuvala was very ill, but when he saw us he staggered on to his feet, and, rolled in a bath-towel, announced that he would come away with us. No remonstrances were of any avail ; he said he belonged to us—no longer Samoan ‘tama’—and with us he meant to remain always. It was raining heavily at the time, and he insisted on coming out of the hut into the open air to show us

how well he could walk ; but, poor thing, he had overrated his strength, for after taking a few steps his head swam, and he collapsed, and it took two of us to get him back to his bamboo pillow and palm-leaf mat. Despite the violence with which they took the disease, and the suicidal pranks they played on their constitutions while it lasted, the wonderful climate saved them in spite of themselves, and no death ensued during the epidemic that prevailed for some weeks while we were there.

One afternoon a small procession was observed approaching Vailima. First came an old chief, named Avau, who had served with distinction in the late war, a great scar on his cheek bearing testimony to the fact ; then came his son Lefau, a tall stripling clad in a girdle of green leaves ; and following them were three or four retainers bearing offerings to Tusitala and his wife. They were cordially received, and then a boy and girl sat down at the end of the verandah to prepare kava. I noticed that it was evidently considered etiquette always to grate the roots within sight, so that the

guest might be sure it was specially made fresh for him. While it was being got ready the palm-leaf baskets were opened, and the gifts admired, but not too much, or the Samoans would have thought it dreadfully bad form. In the first basket was a large crab, with abnormally long claws ; in the next, two fish like red mullet ; and in the other two, bananas, bread-fruits, and a couple of very superior pine-apples without any prickles on their tuft of leaves. This old chief lived many miles away, but the fame of the wonders of Vailima and the great esteem in which the Writer of Tales was held by the natives had penetrated to his remote village, so that morning he had landed from his boat at Mulinuu Point, and had then proceeded on foot to pay his respects to the great man of Vailima. The baskets of food were a sort of peace-offering, and then, after the kava had been served, the old chief revealed the object of his visit, which was to request that his son Lefau might be taken into the service of his host for a short time, as a little experience of that kind was all that was necessary to render his

education complete. It was a patriarchal scene altogether—the dignified old chief, the retainers with presents, and the handsome son looking eagerly to Tusitala to grant his request. It was very hard to refuse them, but there were more house-boys than were necessary at Vailima at the time, so there was really no use for another; but his being of good family weighed greatly in his favour, for it was only recently that the Stevensons had had great trouble with their servants owing to the laundress, who was not of irreproachable lineage. So, after some demurring and a good deal of talk, it was decided, to the great joy of Avau and Lefau, to take the latter for a short time on trial, and the father took leave of his son with many objurgations that he should behave in every way befitting a youth of good family, and prove a credit and an honour to the illustrious Tusitala, who had been good enough to receive him.

CHAPTER VII

PICNIC TO PAPASEIA

ONE morning the sun rose on a day that promised to be full of interest and enjoyment, for the wife of H.B.M. Consul had organised a picnic to Papaseia (the sliding-rock) for our benefit. We were all to meet on the beach at '10 A.M.' However, we were assured that meant eleven or twelve in Samoa, a circumstance which was amply proved by our arriving at eleven o'clock and finding ourselves in perfect time. Soon a large number of guests had assembled, and we set off along grassy roads, across innumerable streams, and at last plunged into the great forest which completely clothes all the island back from the sea. Here the track became narrow—only wide enough for one horse at a time—and it was a picturesque sight as the cavalcade of about

forty riders wound in single file through the great orchid and liana-hung trees and tall ferns, the bright-coloured dresses of the girls contrasting brilliantly with the green surroundings. It was a glorious day, with a blazing sun overhead, and perhaps the distant view was rendered still more beautiful by the wonderful atmospheric effects of light and shadow caused by the heavy showers of rain that fell at intervals throughout the forenoon; and though we were more than once soaked to the skin, still the sun always shone forth and we were dry in a quarter of an hour. Truly a happy island where no ill effects accrue from such climatic treatment!

There had been a severe gale some time previously—indeed, the same we encountered during our voyage—and in many places huge trees uprooted by the hurricane were lying across the track, giving the gaily-clad riders plenty to do clearing all obstacles that came in the way. Once the path led under a tree the branches of which were just high enough to allow a horse to pass beneath, so all had to duck

their heads in passing, and lie close to their mounts. In many places the undergrowth was so dense that it was difficult to keep one's clothes intact from the ravages of the trailing lianas, and often the direction chosen by some madcap Samoan girl could be easily discerned by the strips of coloured calico hanging from the boughs. Again the track continued over rocks which afforded little foothold ; but the slim, wiry horses, well used to island life, reminded the traveller of the ponies in Norway and Iceland, so carefully and surely did they pick their way. Many were the songs and choruses sung as we cantered along, even Chevalier's coster ballads asserting their popularity, the Samoans soon catching the refrain and taking up the chorus ; but more often they sang their own songs, which were very pretty, and much more suitable to the surroundings, the primeval forest and the palm-trees.

After several hours' riding we emerged from the dense forest on to a raised plateau ; and far away over the tops of the trees, undulating like the great

waves of the ocean, Apia Bay lay sparkling in the sunlight, and to the right the mountains—on the slope of which our little shanty stood, and farther up Vailima—stretching away in the blue distance. A number of native boys who had been sent on early in the morning with the luncheon were waiting for us, so we dismounted, the horses had their saddles and bridles taken off, and were tethered to different cocoanut and bread-fruit trees. But the old difficulty always present in the islands had to be contended with. Upwards of three dozen horses take up some room, and owing to the impenetrability of the forest the available space was limited. They were all on the alert watching to give each other vicious kicks or bites. However, their likes and dislikes were pretty well known to their owners, so while I was wandering round looking for a tree near a horse which my steed deigned to tolerate, a bright-eyed Samoan girl came smiling up with her pony and said :

‘Talofa ! I know your horse ; mine love yours, they great friends, quite fathers ! Ioe !’ So we

fastened them to adjacent trees, and with easy minds left the ' fathers ' together.

The roar of the waterfall guided us in the right direction, and we set about descending the precipitous banks of the gully through which the river ran. It was no easy matter, as where there happened to be some little soil where one could secure foothold, those in advance generally carried it away with them, leaving nothing but bare rocks for others who came afterwards. However, in a short time we reached the top of the waterfall, where those remained who were going to enjoy the pastime from which the rock takes its name, the rest of us continuing our way to the bottom of Papaseia. Arrived at our destination, our fair hostess mysteriously inquired if we were well supplied with oranges, and brightened up our ignorance by beamingly informing us that strict etiquette on these occasions necessitated our pelting the sliders with fruit.

Soon the excitement commenced by the American Consul poising himself on the edge of the smooth rock, and in a minute he was rushing down with the

great fall of water into the deep pool at our feet. His exploit was followed fast and furiously by the majority of the guests, amid great laughter and merriment. It was indeed a delightful and animated sight: the great rock covered on either side with orchids; the steep banks so close together, thickly wooded with grand tropic trees and flowering shrubs, their roots embedded in green moss and maidenhair fern—and such ferns, each leaf as large as a shilling; kingfishers, with their metallic blue wings, flashed across the water every few minutes, and the beautiful rainbow-hued doves flitted overhead. The Samoan girls, decked out with garlands of leaves and flowers twisted over their bright-coloured dresses, with many shouts and screams, gliding down the rock, three at a time and one on the top of another, all helped to fill in a gay and picturesque scene, which the radiant blue sky, now without a cloud, rendered perfect.

An Englishman, who at first was slightly horrified at the danger and reckless frivolity which the sliding-rock afforded, became so infected by the

spirit of the enterprise that he boldly volunteered to try his luck too, a statement which was received with rapture by the native girls, who hastened to collect a plentiful supply of missiles in the shape of oranges, bananas, and mangoes. Planting himself on the top of the rock, he begged everyone to look at him, as he flattered himself he knew a better method of descending than the others did. After a considerable amount of talk and explanation as to how he was going to do it, he started, but, making a slight mistake as to the correct course, missed the smooth, polished rock where the great rush of water was, and came bounding down the side of the waterfall where there was comparatively little water and very rugged rocks, and, as one of the native girls, who was convulsed with laughter, ejaculated : ‘ Oh, he have not missed one ! ’

On emerging from the pool, he said :

‘ Well, I am glad to have had the experience, very exhilarating, and all that, but once is quite enough.’ But this the Samoans would not hear of, and four of the prettiest girls, ignoring his remon-

strances, insisted on conducting him over the proper way, so there was nothing for it but to submit with as good a grace as possible. They perched him on the brow of the rock, and the four dainty daughters of the island, looking like bewitching water-sprites, brimming over with fun and mischief, arranged themselves behind him. At a signal off they set, and all disappeared into the pool below. First the witches appeared, beaming with ecstasy; next their victim's sailor-hat, which, strangely enough, had stuck on his head and gone down with him, floated to the surface minus the crown. The girls continued to tread water for a little and then swam ashore, when the woeful countenance of our luckless compatriot came in sight. He was now quite convinced he had had enough of the sliding-rock, and no entreaties would coax him to venture again.

Shortly after this lunch was proposed, and it was found that the native boys had been busy—all the large palm-leaf baskets had been emptied, and their contents spread out on banana-leaves.

The excellent island fare, such as roast pig, chickens, palusame, yams, and taro, was augmented by a splendid Yorkshire ham, American canned meat, and wine, and all was charmingly decorated with ropes of moss, ferns, and wild flowers.

As the afternoon was closing in we had to prepare for the homeward ride : the light fades so suddenly it is necessary to get out of the forest before the sun sets. Saddles and saddle-cloths were quickly adjusted, and soon the merry party were winding through the thick undergrowth. When the delightful witches were asked if they were not afraid of drowning their victim, they hastened to explain :

‘Oh no; his head quite empty; him never drown!’ and proceeded to entertain us with anecdotes of certain white folk of their acquaintance whose inability to swim much amazed them—nearly all Samoans being wonderful swimmers from their earliest youth. One girl, with many native interjections, told how a German woman, wife of an official in the island, had seen them swimming in

the river. It appeared so pleasant that she asked if they thought she could do likewise. They answered, 'Why, yes,' and invited her to join them.

'So,' went on our friend, 'I come out and give her my dress, and she jump off tree into deep water. We say, "Vely good." But she not come up! So by-and-by we look, and there she lie at bottom of river! German woman, fool! Me sign to her, and wave my hand, and say, "Come up!" Oh, she not move; so we dive and bring her up. Oh, she *quite* dead! We turn her and beat her—she come alive again! Oh, German woman no good!'

A young chief from the island of Savaii, whose acquaintance we made shortly after landing, never lost a chance of improving his English, which he spoke tolerably well, and gleaning information about London, a city which he had vague aspirations to visit; this day, returning from the picnic, he managed to get his horse next mine, and begged me to tell him more concerning countries and cities I had seen. It was impossible for him to understand what a town was like: his most soaring

imagination could only picture a straggling line of interminable stores and wooden shanties all dotted round the coast. When he tried to realise streets and blocks of houses the poor fellow became completely lost.

‘But there must be room for the trees to grow round each house?’ he suggested. On being told there were miles and miles of houses and no trees, he exclaimed :

‘No trees! What do the people do for food; they cannot live without their bread-fruits and cocoanuts!’ and he was horrified when I explained that there were no bread-fruits, and that cocoanuts were not a staple diet, and made up his mind to abandon the idea of visiting London. Returning to the subject, he could not understand why the houses were not all built on the seashore, where ‘schooners’ could come in and fish be caught. Then, when he heard that fish was sent to all the towns by rail every day, he considered that a most wonderful ‘tongafitie’—almost enough to reconcile him to the lack of bread-fruit and taro.

‘How? fresh fish every day, and the sea far away! Oh! I must go to Peretania.’ Later in the afternoon, after deep reflection, he said:

‘Do you think, Matalanumoana, you, who have crossed great oceans, that 40*l.* would be sufficient to take me to your Peretania (Britain), that I might live there for a year, and then return to Samoa? I think bymby—a long time—I *might* have 30*l.* or 40*l.* And then, fresh fish every day! Talofa!’

Making haste, we managed to get out of the forest just before the sun sank behind the mountains, and when we had reached the beach many of the riders had detached themselves from the party, and had ridden off to their homes in different directions. By the time we had traversed the length of Apia—in a much less fair and spotless condition than when we started in the morning—there was only a mere handful left of the merry party to bid ‘Tofa, Soi fua,’ to our pretty young hostess, who was always so ready to show courtesy and kindly hospitality to her compatriots visiting the Southern Pacific.

CHAPTER VIII

'TALOFA' AND 'TOFA, SOI FUA'

WHEN Mr. and Mrs. Stevenson first settled at Vailima, the ground where the plantation and garden now lie was covered with jungle as dense as that which now surrounds the grounds. It took a long time to clear it, and there were many prospecting expeditions into the great primeval forest which closed in the place from the outside world. Tusitala told us how once, when they were in the bush and the boys were cutting a way through the poison-plants and creepers, tough and strong, and lashed together like a ship's rigging, they came upon the skeleton of a man, and, lying beside it, a skull. As it was only a year or so since the war had ended, they concluded that some warrior going home through the forest, and carrying with him the

head of an enemy whom he had slain in the fight, had succumbed to his wounds. ‘ Whoever he was,’ said Tusitala, ‘ chief or mere fighting-man, we dug a grave at the foot of a big tree, and gave him and the head of his victim Christian burial ; and in case he *was* a warrior, the boys fired a volley over his grave.’

After living in this ideal island home, it was easy to understand the glamour that enshrouded everything to the vivid imagination and poetic mind of our brilliant countryman. The complete solitude and isolation from the conventionalities of the outside world suited his temperament and lent wings to his romantic fancy.

When he had finished a book he would sometimes rest from his writing for a short time. Then a new romance would begin to piece itself together in his mind, till it took tangible shape, and then, by five in the morning his lamp would be lit and his pen flying over the paper, while he lay propped up by pillows on a narrow bed in a little room which looked out on the mountains. He would continue

without intermission, sometimes till twelve o'clock ; but generally he would stop at eleven for tiffin, and rarely returned to his writing again during the day ; but next morning he would be at it again by five. Sometimes he dictated, and then he would walk about, dictating with great rapidity, and seldom having to correct anything afterwards.

— The library at Vailima was a beautiful room opening off the second verandah, and the walls lined with books, arms and pictures. ' But I can't write in that room,' said our host ; ' it's all so *suitable* for a literary man—drives every idea out of my head. Sometimes I go in to look up something, but I generally seize the book and rush off with it to my den.' So we crossed the flying bridge from one verandah to another, and entered his little work-room, with its bare floor and varnished walls. ' This,' he continued, curling himself up on a mat in the corner, ' is the sort of place I can write in—where nothing looks like literature. A deal kitchen table and a small bed are all I require ; chairs are an unnecessary luxury ; a mat flung on the ground

is all one wants.’ And from where we sat could be seen the snow-white tropic birds soaring over Vala, the summit of which he always spoke of as his last resting-place on earth. While we were talking the whole place shook and vibrated with earthquake shocks; and, as Tusitala remarked, ‘It is not so much what happens as what one waits for!’

Many were the charming poems and jottings of yarns that were flung on the floor or allowed to drop into the waste-paper basket: indeed, a rummager in this sun-baked little room might have culled many riches from the scraps of paper carelessly flung aside and forgotten. A favourite occupation of Tusitala’s was to write bright and sympathetic little poems on the members of his household, each of whom received the MS. of his or her particular panegyric.

It was strange that, with his poetic mind and fastidious love of tone and colour, he had almost no ear for music. In the evening we used to sit on the verandah, or lounge in hammocks slung from the supports of the second verandah, and three of us

used to play guitar, mandoline and banjo. We could make the most discordant sounds, or play our instruments horribly out of tune, the humid atmosphere rendering them independent of each other in a very short time—it never disturbed Louis Stevenson; he would placidly continue his conversation with his wife or mother (the latter a delightful old Scotch lady), or any visitor who happened to be staying at Vailima, and while he talked he would thoughtfully stroke the backs of Maud and Henry with his lithe feet and long toes. Animals loved him, and those two house cats always tried to lie within reach of his sympathetic touch.

It was a lonely life as far as white people were concerned, but the most favoured guests were his own brown neighbours. Sometimes a superficial globe-trotter, or some British or American acquaintance, would arrive at Apia by the San Francisco mail packet, and would ride up to Vailima to make a brief call on the Stevensons. They received a hearty welcome from Mrs. Stevenson. Sometimes Louis would be visible, but just as often he did not

appear ; if he was busy on a new book he never allowed visitors to interfere with his writing. Occasionally, however, a friend who had been cruising on board some trading schooner would land at Upolu ; then, indeed, the novelist was interested in his guest. He would listen with avidity to the accounts of the gales he had encountered, or the characters who had been traded with, his black eyes blazing with excitement over any adventures and sparkling with enjoyment at any quaint tales. He revelled in those South Sea yarns, and when the clouds descended on Vailima, and a fire was kindled in the only fireplace in the island, we would sit round the 'tongafitie,' as the natives called it, and he would pour out his wonderful experiences while sailing for months among the islands, specially luxuriating in the yarns of mingled gore and profanity. But he was so simple in his interests, any tale of humanity or animal life pleased him ; nothing seemed to bore him.

The natives respected him mightily, and many were the deputations sent by chiefs from far and

near to ask the advice of their beloved Tusitala on important matters of State. He gave every subject his most profound consideration, and the counsel he gave was ever wise, just, and peaceful ; the chiefs or their retainers always went away cheered, and apparently well contented. He understood the natives thoroughly, and certainly no white man on the island possessed their confidence so completely.

Tusitala told me of a certain white lady on whom he called, and he observed that the native girls in her house were wearing made dresses. On commenting on the matter to her, she answered, ' Yes, they are all clothed ; no woman shall come into my presence who shows any part of her body ! ' ' Well,' continued Louis Stevenson, ' I just blazed at her. " Woman ! " I thundered, " is your mind so base that you cannot see and admire what is beautiful in the form God Almighty has created ? Do you not understand that their own dress is right for the climate and their simple way of living ? and do you not see that the first thing you do on

landing on this beautiful island is to pollute their minds and sully their modest thoughts ? ” ’

Most Samoans love any kind of religious function ; they sing hymns with the same vigour and enjoyment that they throw into the vocal part of the ‘ siva ’ ; so when the ‘ puu ’ (conch shell) summoned them to ‘ loto,’ it was with cheerful alacrity that they trooped round the verandah to Mrs. Stevenson’s room, as it was always in his mother’s apartment that Tusitala held morning service. The prayers he read were simply worded and very beautiful, and always ended with a petition that they and their island neighbours might long live in peace and love in their forest home. Many of the ‘ boys ’ were very anxious to be allowed to pray, and when permitted to do so, amazed us by the eloquence and earnestness which they displayed, and it was wonderful to mark the change in their language : the everyday colloquial terms were laid aside, and they made use of the most polished ‘ chief ’ language only.

The Talolo is one of the most important cere-

monies held by the natives in Samoa, and is a barbaric pageant rarely witnessed by strangers. It is the great gathering that takes place when the chiefs of the different villages come with their troops of warriors to pay taxes to the king. We were most anxious to witness one of these functions, and when the news came to Vailima that a talolo was to be held on the following day near the shore beyond Mulinuu Point, Tamaitai and I started early in the morning, in order to be in good time. On the road we passed small bands of natives, all in gala attire, and all hastening in the direction of Mulinuu. When near our destination we left the horses at a friend's house, and proceeded on foot to the ground where the talolo was to be held. After passing through the village, composed of exceptionally well-built native houses, we arrived at a cleared stretch of land, grassy and undulating, shut in on one side by trees and dense underwood; and on the other, beyond the belt of tall palms that fringe the coast, the breakers of the Pacific Ocean thundered against the coral reef and threw up

great pillars of spray, while numbers of long canoes were drawn up on the shore.

At one end of the cleared ground, under a spreading bread-fruit tree, sat King Maliatoa. Four Samoans, clad in white and armed with rifles, stood erect and motionless behind him ; and from the other end, up a long vista between the trees, where the undergrowth had been cut down, his subjects advanced in succession and laid their tribute at his feet. Groups of natives were sitting at intervals all round the clearing, each class distinct ; the chiefs either in pure white or brown tapa lava-lavas, and their followers in many shades of bark cloth, and all with garlands of scarlet hibiscus, red berries, and strips of coloured bark hung fantastically round their necks, waists and knees. Many had their hair dyed to a tawny gold, which harmonised well with their copper-coloured skins. Among the chiefs we recognised several acquaintances, and they welcomed us heartily, making room for us to sit beside them on the grass. It was a unique crowd, for though there were some thousands of Samoans.

present, there was no movement—they all sat motionless ; and in a few minutes we became aware that we were the only people who were talking. There was absolute silence ; no one even coughed.

Where we sat the ground sloped a little, so we commanded a perfect view of all the proceedings. Each village advanced in turn in the same order. First, up the long avenue between the trees rushed two warriors in full war-paint and with blackened faces ; they carried spears in their hands, and with whoops and shouts went through the pantomime of driving off and routing the enemy. Then they executed a fantastic dance of triumph, while the drums of calf-hide and pipes advanced through the forest, and the representatives of an entire village appeared, headed by the tapo—the chief girl, in this case a tiny child of five years old—a web of fine matting round her waist, garlands of flowers round her shoulders, and a huge head-dress of hair, dyed a bright red-gold, with a piece of looking-glass fixed in front, which flashed and sparkled in the sun. The little creature came bounding forward with a

quaint, graceful step, never losing time to the wild music, and waving a short spear in one hand and a long spray of flowers in the other. Behind her came the chief, with a head-dress similar to the tapo's, only much larger, the hair being bright crimson, and besides a piece of looking-glass, many ornaments, which towered above the flowing, flame-coloured hair, and round his neck a collar of pointed whales' teeth. He was a magnificent-looking fellow, this chief, of perfect physique, suggesting the idea of an ancient Roman gladiator as he came bounding forward, throwing up his spear, and making it quiver and vibrate in the air. His crowd of bronze-coloured followers, most of them superb specimens of humanity, advanced with a sort of fantastic dancing-step, shoulder to shoulder, in regular lines, all the while brandishing their spears and clubs, some of them carrying huge knives, which they tossed in the air and caught again. The noise was terrific; every man seemed to shout his loudest, some uttering shrill yells; and above it all rose the deafening din of pipes and drums. Then those who carried the taxes and

presents, in the shape of pigs, bananas, bread-fruits, cocoa-nuts, and pine-apples, danced forward, and laid the large palm-leaf baskets on the ground at the king's feet. Afterwards the chief ranged himself with the other chiefs, and his followers took their places beside the men of the last village who had entered, becoming as silent and motionless as the others.

The next village was of a facetious turn of mind. The forerunners in this case, instead of being armed with knives and spears, simply carried large fans of strips of palm-leaf plaited together; and they went through a humorous exposition of routing an imaginary enemy, that happened on this occasion to be so beneath their notice that they merely swept them off like chaff with a few contemptuous flourishes of their fans; then they skipped into the air, pirouetting, and boasting what they could do if the enemy were worth fighting; and whenever the imaginary foe attempted to return, they instantly routed them with a few waves of their fans. This heroic act caused a few smiles to flicker across the faces of the

hitherto immovable throng, which still maintained an unbroken silence. When all was safe, and the feeble enemy was supposed to be fanned out of sight, the sound of drums and pipes swelled louder, and the tapo—this time a magnificent woman, quite five feet nine in height, with a web of very fine black tapa round her waist—came springing forward, whirling round and round as she brandished a huge knife above her head, tossing about the long hair of her head-dress, causing the mirror to blaze and the many ornaments suspended round her neck and waist to rattle and flash in the sunlight. The chief and his hundreds of warriors—for this was one of the most powerful villages—followed with a rush, and went through their evolutions with enthusiastic yells and war-whoops. It was a stirring and exciting scene, but the crowd of onlookers sat unmoved and solemn.

The inhabitants of each village have their own particular dances, scorning to borrow ideas from their neighbours; but through all the gyrations, from wild and fantastic war dance to the state-

liest of measures, perfect time and order were maintained.

As the afternoon wore on, and still the villagers trooped up, we ventured to speak in low tones to a few chiefs whom we knew, and who congregated round my friend and me, and the oppressive silence was relaxed to a small extent. All around the trees seemed to dance and vibrate in the heat, although not a leaf moved, except the topmost plumes of the palms, that gently stirred, showing silver in the dazzling sunlight, and whispered and sang in the ocean breeze.

An old chief, who had paid us a distinguished visit shortly after our arrival at the cottage, took off several of his garlands and decorations, and fastened them on to us. The others, observing this attention, hastened with alarming speed to unfix their necklets and girdles and hang them round us. It was a little embarrassing—they were so hearty, and no one would allow another to outdo him in generosity. They insisted on our accepting their ornaments of flowers, and strips of coloured bark, and red berries,

which were permeated with cocoa-nut oil and stained to a dark brown any material with which they came in contact. One stalwart chief unfixed from round his neck the cord of cocoa-fibre from which was suspended a beautiful pearl shell, and hung it round my neck ; another tore from among the ornaments in his hair a large whale's tooth and presented it to Tamaitai.

In order not to obstruct the view of those immediately behind me I had sat with my umbrella down, and on looking for it where it had been lying on the ground beside me, I was surprised to find it gone ; it was a little white umbrella, and I was unwilling to let it go so easily. On making known my loss an old grey-haired chief from a remote part of a neighbouring island, where the white man is a rare sight and the white woman almost unknown, smiled, and held it up to me, and, taking an allamanda blossom from behind his ear, handed it to me, and then, nodding reassuringly, put the umbrella under his arm, saying, ‘ Mialofa, Matalanumoana ! ’ I would rather he had taken a fancy to anything else,

for it happened to be the only one I possessed which was not disabled in some way ; but after our exchange of presents he seemed so enchanted with his new possession that I was glad to let the old fellow have it ; for an umbrella, especially a white or coloured one, is one of the greatest joys of a Samoan's life. But kindness and courtesy were everywhere, and among those thousands of brown, tattooed warriors, armed to the teeth, and not knowing one word of English, we two white women felt as safe as if the Union Jack were flying over our heads, and we were surrounded by our own countrymen.

Towards evening, when the representatives of the last village had arrived, and the warriors, having gone through their mimic battle, were moving off, two big fellows sprang out from the ranks and, bounding in front of the king, proceeded, armed only with fans, to show how in future they would always be able to clear away the enemies of their country. This ended, the drums and pipes were silent, the war-whoops died away, and the talking-men began

their part of the function. One at a time they stood in the centre of the space, where the vast piles of pigs, fruit, and vegetables were lying, and harangued the multitude. This portion of the talolo was rather dull, and no one appeared to be sorry when it came to an end ; and as evening began to close in there was a general move towards the beach, where the boats belonging to those who lived far round the coast had been left. There were canoes, whalers, and splendid chiefs' boats carrying a great number of oarsmen. Soon many had embarked and put to sea, to the accompaniment of swinging boat songs, forming a brown and white trail in the blue water as they followed each other round the rocks that shut out the next coral bay from Mulinuu Point.

Fanua, the daughter of the chief of Apia, a charming girl, who had been tapo of the district until her marriage with Mr. Gurr, an Englishman settled in Upolu, sometimes went expeditions with us, and few picnics or merrymakings of any kind were complete without this pretty and bright-witted

Samoan girl. One day she took me to visit some of her friends, and to get baskets and native curios at Vailele.

After passing the copra sheds, Matautu Point, and the British Consulate, and just before reaching the Fuisa River, we came upon the Consul and his wife practising polo on the sands. Having searched the neighbourhood for a large enough clearing suitable for the game, Mr. Cusack-Smith found that the only place available was this stretch of beach, which for a few hours each day was left uncovered by the sea. After promising to look in at the Consulate on our return, we continued our way round the glistening white coral bays, across many streams where boys and girls were employed spearing fish in a desultory fashion. Past Matafangatele we stopped at a little house, the roof of which was smothered in branches and clusters of coral which were bleaching in the sun, while masses of it lay piled up against the walls ; and on the shore, above tide-mark, some flat-topped rocks were covered with large pieces of coral which

had just been brought up from the sea. The old fisher and his wife were very willing to show us all they had, but what they were justly proud of was a tree of rose-pink coral ; it stood many feet high, and was so exquisitely fine that it would have been almost impossible to transport, as after it had been dried the slightest vibration or movement would shake the tiny fronds from their stems. Then there were pieces like huge mushrooms or small tables, and others resembling great clusters of roses and lilies. But all were bleached and dead looking—very different from the marvellous colours seen through the clear water at the edge of the reef. Then the great flower-like, coral heads are filled in with the most brilliant rose colour, turquoise green and purple, veritably representing a gorgeous submarine garden.

When we had visited Fanua's friends we called at another house where the natives received us graciously and offered us kava to drink. I could see no grater, and feared it had been prepared in the original 'faa' Samoan fashion ; however, courtesy

necessitated our acceptance, so we held it up, and saying 'Ia manuia,' quaffed it off.

By this time the afternoon was closing in, and it was time to turn our horses' heads towards home. As we rounded a promontory that jutted far out to sea, looking back, we noticed how black the ocean was by Getongo Point, and how the breakers were gathering in strength as they cannoned against the outer reef. Great clouds were accumulating and sweeping towards us, and it was evident that a tremendous squall was rushing up the coast. We made all speed for the Consulate, but before long the wind had caught us, and was tearing limbs from trees and hurling them, along with cocoanuts, through the air. Our horses, as anxious as we were to escape the violence of the tempest, put their heads down and stretched themselves out for a race. The thundering of the breakers and the shrieking of the gale as it swept through the trees and rattled the creepers against the trunks increased with the gathering blackness of the sky. At last, when it felt as if the storm would burst

every instant, and we should be hopelessly drenched and battered, our horses put on a final spurt, and, dashing up to the verandah of the Consulate, we sprang from our saddles just as the clouds overhead precipitated themselves in a mighty torrent of rain. Native servants, who were in readiness for us, flung covers over the saddles and put the horses in shelter; and after the excitement of racing the storm it was very cheering to be welcomed by Mrs. Cusack-Smith, smiling and gracious, and full of kindness and hospitality. Indeed, the kindness of the Consul and his beautiful young wife went a long way to make our visit to Upolu a happy experience, never to be forgotten.

Early in January a ball was given at Apia in the large wooden hall, which came in suitably for all functions. Every detail in connection with it was novel for a ball—even our method of going to it. After an early dinner the party from Vailima started to ride down to Fanua's house, where native boys had been sent on with our white garments for the dance. We started in flannels, as it

would feel chilly when we rode home in the early morning hours ; but as the sun had disappeared behind the mountains, we wore neither gloves nor hats. After arraying ourselves, we strolled down to the hall, arriving about eight o'clock, and found a large number of people had already assembled. It was a most successful and delightful ball, about a hundred people being present. During the first couple of hours it was a remarkably pretty sight : the few white women present all dressed in pure white or very pale tints ; the native girls and half-castes in bright colours, and, especially the former, wearing wreaths and garlands of sweet-scented flowers ; all the men in the ordinary white evening-dress of the tropics, their only touch of colour being the gay cummerbunds wound round their waists. Then the walls were tastefully decorated with flags and flowers, and through the open windows and doors the stars twinkled in the deep blue of the sky, while the distant roar of the surf on the coral reef was wafted to us through the palm groves. The music consisted of a hand-organ, a concertina,

and a violin, and though they took it in turn, the poor musicians had to work hard, and by 2 A.M. I think we were all rather sorry for them.

At first it did not feel hot, and appeared to compare favourably with a London or Melbourne ball-room ; but after half a dozen dances, which were really danced—there was no shirking or walking through them—one began to realise the climate one was dancing in. Fortunately, it was not a distressing heat, and we should not have thought about it only, looking round at the crowd of merry-makers after a sprightly barn dance, or a very wearing measure—which I had not seen before, but which was immense fun, called the 'Circassian Circle,' which lasted without a moment's intermission for twenty-five minutes—we noticed how the immaculate whiteness of our clothes had turned to a pale grey, and the lack of colour in the cheeks of the white guests. But no one thought of the unbecoming effects of the atmosphere ; everyone was bent on dancing and enjoying themselves, which they thoroughly succeeded in doing. Kai Sue and the

ubiquitous Ulla dispensed refreshments all night to the dancers ; but a sip of kava occasionally seemed the most reviving thing to take. The native beverage certainly suits the climate.

About 2.30 A.M. the musicians were ' dissolved almost to jelly ' with their untiring efforts, and so the entire company—Samoans, Germans, Americans, English, and a few who were hardly certain to what nationality they belonged—all joined hands and sang ' Auld Lang Syne.' Then an enthusiastic patriot started ' God Save the Queen,' which was heartily sung, though much independence was shown in the choice of words, hardly anyone appearing to be cognisant of the real ones. This terminated a truly delightful ball, and we returned with Fanua and her husband to their house, where we changed our dresses, and, with a stirrup-cup of kava, bade Mr. and Mrs. Gurr ' Tofa,' and started for Vailima.

As long as we had smooth roads we galloped on the springy turf, and it was a most exhilarating sensation tearing along avenues of palm-trees, phantom-like, in the light of the full moon, and the

night air rushing through our loose hair. However, this excitement did not last long, for soon we were in the depths of the forest, and it was so dark under the trees that we had to trust the horses to pick their own way up the mountain track. But after ascending some hundreds of feet we emerged on to a plateau, and one of the most exquisite sights imaginable lay before us. The full moon hung in a cloudless sky, and shone with miraculous brilliance on the world below. Over the tops of the palms, which looked like thousands of great silver ostrich-feathers glistening with dew in the white light, we beheld the Pacific Ocean, for once, like its name, a vast plain of silver sparkling with jewels; and all around absolute stillness, except the wild note of a bird overhead, or the sudden, mysterious scuttle and rustling of unseen Nature for ever heard in the jungle.

That morning we were all down to breakfast by seven o'clock, much refreshed by our dance of the previous night, though we had only had two hours' sleep after our early ride. Tusitala had laid aside his pen for an hour to come in and

hear all our news, and how we had enjoyed ourselves. The two small weekly papers which flourish on the beach of Apia gave enthusiastic descriptions of the ball, and one of them remarked that they were delighted to see the good-comradeship that existed among all the settlers, and rejoiced in the 'absolute lack of starch or stiffness about the white ladies !' Louis Stevenson said, 'Considering the temperature, that might be taken in different ways, but here it evidently means a profound compliment.'

At last the time drew nigh when we must part from our friends in Samoa ; and to none did we feel it sadder to say good-bye than to the Mother Superior and the good Sisters at the Visitation Convent at Savalalo. During our residence in the island we had many opportunities of witnessing the good effects of their unselfish devotion to the work of education among the native girls. On the morning of our departure, as we passed through the gateway into the convent grounds, groups of little ones were playing in the shade of palms and bread-fruit trees ;

in the schoolrooms the different classes were being taught ; and in the pretty little chapel one of the Sisters, who had a special talent for music, was teaching the choir the anthem for the following Sunday, and the sound of their sweet, tuneful young voices came to us as we sat talking to the Mother Superior. In an outbuilding a few of the elder girls, almost grown women, were being trained in laundry-work ; while in the kitchen lessons in simple cookery were being given. Sewing was carefully taught to all, and the young Samoans seemed to take kindly to their needlework, and were proud to show us the garments made by themselves. All seemed cheerful and happy, and it was a pleasure to observe the great amount of confidence and love that so evidently existed between the children and the Mother Superior—a gracious, kindly French lady—and the Sisters, who had willingly exiled themselves from their homes in France, England, and Germany, to carry their civilising and refining influence among those young islanders.

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Once more we are at sea, and the ship is slipping rapidly out of Apia Bay. Far up on the mountain we caught our last glimpse of the red roof of Vailima, and the Union Jack floating above it, where Robert Louis Stevenson has woven his magic web, creating beings of infinite mode, joining East and West, and vividly contrasting the grey sternness of his cold and gloomy native Northern land, the frantic commercial rush of the United States, and the glorious warmth and colour of the South Seas. As the ship sped towards the island of Savaii, Upolu gradually sank into the blue ocean, and the last we saw was the peak of Vala, where the mighty genius and kindly man now lies at rest among his beloved Samoans.

Under the wide and starry sky
Dig the grave and let me lie.
Glad did I live, and gladly die,
And I laid me down with a will.

This be the verse you grave for me :
Here he lies where he longed to be ;
Home is the sailor, home from the sea ;
And the hunter home from the hill.

Aug. 9. 1895

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